



**A LEADERSHIP TALE OF TWO SCHOOL WORLDS: EXPERIENCES OF  
PRINCIPALS IN FEE PAYING AND NO FEE PAYING SCHOOLS**

**by**

**ZAMOKWAKHE THANDINKOSI NCOKWANA**

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**Durban, South Africa**

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**Supervisor: Dr Inba Naicker**

## **Supervisor's Statement**

**This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval.**

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**Dr Inba Naicker**

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**Date**

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is especially dedicated to my late father Mbewu Alpheous Ncokwana (ukuthula makube naye) and my mother Geli Priscina “MaMnyandu” Ncokwana for their love and unwavering support since childhood to date. I also dedicate it to my late wife Nokuthula Purity “MaMbambo” Ncokwana (ukuthula makube naye), my son Vuyani Mthobisi and my daughter Sinothile Sinothando for being my fountain of inspiration from the day I undertook this journey.

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## ABSTRACT

There are multiple school categorisations in the South African schooling system. One such categorisation is the fee paying and no fee paying schools. There is a dearth of scholarship on the experiences of principals leading in these school categorisations. This study therefore explored the leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools and how these categorisations influenced such experiences. Principals in these schools contended with different leadership realities which impacted on the execution of the schools' primary mandate of the delivery of quality public education. This study involved examining the leadership challenges of these principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools and how they alleviated such challenges to ensure that the teaching and learning processes were minimally or not compromised. To do this, I drew on the Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) as the theoretical lens. Methodologically, a qualitative approach was employed. Four schools in Umlazi and Pinetown Districts of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education were purposively sampled and four school principals were interviewed. Two principals were from the fee paying schools and two were from the no fee paying schools. I also utilised document reviews to supplement data generated from interviews. The documents that were reviewed included the minutes of staff and School Governing Body (SGB) meetings.

The findings of the study revealed that the budgetary constraints emanating from either inadequacy of funding or unsteady flow of school fee revenue or both filtered through to various facets of school operations. This was mirrored in the resourcing and infrastructural capacities of these schools and the quality of education that they claimed to provide for their learners. Consequently, the principals employed a diversified cocktail of mitigation strategies which were tailor-made to respond directly to their unique school realities. It is recommended that the Department of Basic Education re-models or modify some sections of its funding policies, particularly of fee paying and no fee paying schools, so that they uncompromisingly address the unique leadership realities in these schools. Such a process may also ensure that these policies remain relevant to the plight of some learners in public schools and the ever-changing realm of educational practice.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
ANNSSF	Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding
BA	Bachelor of Arts
CAS	Complex Adaptive Systems
CLT	Complexity Leadership Theory
EFA	Education for All
FDE	Further Diploma in Education
FINCOM	Finance Committee
GET	General Education and Training
JPTD	Junior Primary Teachers' Diploma
LTSM	Learner-Teacher Support Material
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSNP	National Schools Nutrition Programme
PDE	Provincial Department of Education
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
QLTC	Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
STD	Secondary Teachers' Diploma
UED	University Education Diploma
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly known as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Item	Page Number
Title page	i
Supervisor's statement	ii
Declaration of originality	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
List of Abbreviations	vii
Table of contents	viii
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PREPARING FOR TAKE OFF</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Rationale for the study	3
1.3 Significance of the study	4
1.4 Aim and objectives of the study	5
1.5 Critical questions	5
1.6 Definition of operational concepts	5
1.6.1 Leadership	5
1.6.2 Fee paying schools	6
1.6.3 No fee paying schools	6
1.7 Chapter Outline	6
1.8 Chapter Summary	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>DRAWING ON EXPERIENCED PILOTS TO NAVIGATE THIS FLIGHT</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Theoretical framework	8
2.2.1 Understanding Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT)	9
2.2.2 Origins of CLT	9
2.2.3 Characteristics of CLT	10



2.2.4	Framing the study within CLT	12
2.3	Review of related literature	13
2.3.1	The policy landscape: Fee paying and no fee paying schools	13
2.3.2	Principals' realities in no fee paying and fee paying schools	18
2.3.2.1	Funding of public schooling system	19
2.3.2.2	Surges in school enrolments	21
2.3.2.3	Demand for secondary education	22
2.3.2.4	Expansion of access to education	23
2.3.3	Constraints in leading no fee and fee paying schools	25
2.3.3.1	Quality of education	25
2.3.3.2	Inadequacy of state funding	27
2.3.3.3	Delaying state funding transfers	30
2.3.3.4	Re-emergence of school fees	31
2.3.3.5	Lack of requisite financial management skills	33
2.3.4	The role of principals amidst constraints	35
2.3.5	Chapter summary	36
	<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	38
	<b>NAVIGATING THIS FLIGHT</b>	38
3.1	Introduction	38
3.2	Research paradigm	38
3.3	Research design	39
3.4	Selection of participants and research sites	41
3.5	Data generation methods	41
3.5.1	Interviews	41
3.5.2	Document review	43
3.6	Piloting the instruments	44
3.7	The research participants	45
3.8	Data analysis	47
3.9	Ethical considerations	47
3.10	Ensuring trustworthiness	48
3.11	Limitations of the study	49
3.12	Chapter summary	49

<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	51
<b>ENGAGING WITH THE FLIGHT DATA</b>	51
4.1 Introduction	51
4.2 Leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools	52
4.2.1 Positive leadership experiences in fee paying schools	52
4.2.1.1 Fluidity in structuring the school budget	52
4.2.1.2 Provision of LTSM	53
4.2.1.3 Offering sports and recreation	53
4.2.1.4 Maintenance of physical resources	54
4.2.1.5 Fundraising drives	55
4.2.2 Negative leadership experiences in fee paying schools	56
4.2.2.1 Culture of non-payment of school fees	56
4.2.2.2 Insufficiency of LTSM	57
4.2.2.3 Budgetary constraints	57
4.2.2.4 Extracurricular programmes	58
4.2.2.5 Fundraising campaigns	59
4.2.2.6 Nutrition programme in a fee paying school	59
4.2.3 Positive experiences of leading no fee paying schools	61
4.2.3.1 Management of school finances	61
4.2.3.2 Learner nutrition	61
4.2.3.3 Escalations in school enrolments	62
4.2.3.4 Fundraising initiatives	62
4.2.3.5 Procurement of LTSM	63
4.2.4 Negative experiences of leading no fee paying schools	64
4.2.4.1 Overpopulated schools	64
4.2.4.2 Schools infrastructure	65
4.2.4.3 Human resources	65
4.2.4.4 Limited LTSM capacity	66
4.2.4.5 Nutrition issues	67
4.3 Principals' leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools	68

4.3.1	Fee paying schools: Principals' leadership challenges	68
4.3.1.1	Compensation for fee exemptions	69
4.3.1.2	Provision of quality education	70
4.3.1.3	School fees and delays in school allocation transfers	71
4.3.1.4	Resources and infrastructural capacity of schools	72
4.3.1.5	Inadequate fiscal resources	73
4.3.2	No fee paying schools: Principals' leadership challenges	74
4.3.2.1	Inadequacy of funding	74
4.3.2.2	Resources and infrastructure	75
4.3.2.3	State of the quality of education	76
4.3.2.4	Public funding delays	76
4.4	Mitigating leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools	78
4.4.1	Mitigation of principals' leadership challenges: Fee paying schools	78
4.4.1.1	Compensation for fee exemptions	78
4.4.1.2	Provision of quality education	79
4.4.1.3	School fees and delays in school allocation transfers	80
4.4.1.4	Resources and infrastructural capacity of schools	81
4.4.1.5	Inadequate fiscal resources	82
4.4.2	Mitigation of principals' leadership challenges: No fee paying schools	83
4.4.2.1	Inadequacy of funding	83
4.4.2.2	Resources and infrastructure	84
4.4.2.3	State of the quality of education	85
4.4.2.4	Public funding delays	86
4.5	Chapter summary	87
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>		88
<b>A POST-MORTEM OF THIS FLIGHT</b>		88
5.1	Introduction	88
5.2	Summary of the study	88
5.3	Conclusions	91
5.3.1	Leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools	91
5.3.2	Principals' leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools	96

5.3.3 Mitigating leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools	97
5.4 Recommendations	99
5.4.1 Recommendation one	100
5.4.2 Recommendation two	100
5.4.3 Recommendation three	100
5.4.4 Recommendation four	101
5.5 Chapter summary	101
<b>REFERENCES</b>	102
<b>APPENDICES</b>	107
Appendix A: Approval letter from KZN Department of Education	107
Appendix B: Permission letter to the principal	108
Appendix C: Consent letter for each participant	110
Appendix D: Declaration by the participant	112
Appendix E: UKZN Ethical Clearance Certificate	113
Appendix F: Interview schedule for principals	114
Appendix G: Turnitin Report	116
Appendix H: Language Clearance Certificate	117

## CHAPTER ONE

### PREPARING FOR TAKE-OFF

#### 1.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore the leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools. It set out to examine how fee paying and no fee paying schools as school categorisations impact on the experiences of leading such schools.

The thrust of this chapter is to provide the background which provides context for this study. To this end, this chapter presents a discussion of legislation and policies that have influenced the education system in the Republic of South Africa (RSA), particularly, the policies that have led to the school categorisations of fee paying and no fee paying schools. The enactment of such legislation and policies intends to redress the inequalities created by apartheid in the South African public schooling system. The chapter also provides the rationale and significance of the study followed by the aim and objectives of the study, critical questions, and definition of operational concepts. It concludes by presenting how the entire thesis is organised.

The apartheid regime's disjointed, racially segregated education system which was characterised by inequitable distribution and allocation of resources along racial lines needed to be overhauled into a single, unified, democratic and equitable system to cater equally for all South Africans (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009). It is within this context that the legislative framework which sought to achieve the aforesaid needed to be formulated hence the *South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996* (SASA). SASA created a legal framework for the establishment of a single, coherent and democratic schooling system (RSA, 1996a). SASA states that the state must fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis (RSA, 1996a, sec. 34) to afford learners the right to education which is enshrined in the Constitution (RSA, 1996b, sec. 29). SASA must also redress the past inequities in educational provision (RSA, 1996a). This legislation and subsequent policies intend to create a redistributive model in the financing of education which seeks to promote equity in spending and access to quality education. Consequently, the *Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding* (ANNSSF) and *Fee Exemptions Regulations of 2006* declared schools in quintiles 1, 2 and 3

(quintile 3 effective 2012) as no fee schools and quintiles 4 and 5 as fee paying schools (Department of Education, 2006). This policy further ingrains school categorisations in the South African education system which is based on the infrastructural capacity and the financial muscle of these schools. These two school categorisations, fee paying and no fee paying, in the public schooling system contend with different realities. These realities become a stark reflection of and are entrenched by how these schools are funded by the state, on the one hand, and how they generate their revenue, on the other hand. Such realities may further highlight the fiscal capacity of each school which may ultimately determine the quality of education provided.

One of the factors that constitute the limitations on the benefits of no fee schools is the limited growth in state educational funding despite escalating demands of no fee school policy (Nordstrum, 2012). This suggests that the financial resources allocated by the state, as per norms and standards funding model, may not be adequate towards ensuring equal accessibility to quality public education. This scenario is further highlighted by the reality that the no fee threshold is determined by the Department of Education (Department of Education, 2006) which, in my view, may fail to appreciate the unique challenges of each school since the set threshold assumes a one size fits all approach. These aforesaid challenges are further compounded by the condition that state funding allocations per learner may only be utilised for non-personnel expenditure (Nordstrum, 2012). This translates into reality that no fee schools may not employ additional academic and support staff utilising state funding which their fee paying counterparts are able to do with school fees revenue.

Fee paying schools may be constrained by, inter alia, policies and regulations applicable to this categorisation. For instance, fee exemptions policy may also pose fiscal constraints in fee paying schools since there has not been any compensation paid for fee exemptions granted (Department of Education, 2006) until 2013 (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2014a). According to *KZN Circular, 3 of 2014*, fee paying schools may apply for compensation for exemptions granted in the next financial year if the exemptions beneficiaries exceed 5% of all full time registered learners (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2014a). Failing to pay compensation in the current financial year entrenches fiscal disparities, compounds the backlogs in the addressing of teaching and learning challenges and fails to respond to the immediate and current school challenges in all faculties of school life. This may culminate in the school having to confront the reality of either unavailability of

funds in its coffers or insufficient revenue to assist it in the execution of its mandate. Further, learners enrolled in that current financial year may be disadvantaged since they may not benefit from the compensation in their current academic year which may have serious implications for the teaching and learning process. I have observed that in some cases the Department of Education either fails to pay, or they only pay after the schools have approached the courts. To this end, whether schools are fee paying or no fee paying, they still confront unique school categorisation realities and challenges which are supposed to be addressed by their leadership, particularly, the principals. Given these realities and challenges for both categorisations, the focus of this study is to explore the leadership experiences of principals in fee and no fee paying schools in Umlazi and Pinetown Districts and whether these school categorisations influence their experiences.

## **1.2 Rationale for the study**

Having been a teacher for 23 years, I have taught at both fee paying and no fee paying schools. I have observed how these school categorisations influence the terrain of leadership. I have also observed the South African public schooling system, particularly the realities confronted by the fee and no fee paying schools regarding the leadership experiences of principals in these aforesaid categorisations. This is informed by ANNSSF which seeks to make accessibility to quality education a possibility for all learners irrespective of their socioeconomic background. However, the no fee school policy has not been accompanied by ascending adjustments in the equitable shares allocated to provinces or any other financial support mechanism such as a conditional grant (Sayed & Motala, 2012). I have observed that in some no fee paying schools, school coffers are exhausted before the next allocation of funds, for the same financial year, is transferred to the school account. This may indicate that these centralised state funding allocations per learner are insufficient. I am of the view that these categorisations have engendered a particular brand of identities and experiences for these schools which may have implications on how they conduct their day-to-day business.

There is still no firm evidence that the current costing per learner is correctly estimated and that the national adequacy benchmark is sufficient (Sayed & Motala, 2012). It may be argued whether the school quintile rankings are accurate as their inaccuracy may impact on the level of funding allocations per learner since it is determined by a quintile placement. Quintile 3 is regarded as the adequacy benchmark for per learner funding allocations (Department of Education, 2006). It may also be argued whether this adequacy benchmark is actually

adequate in practice. Further, failure to reimburse schools for fee exemptions granted in the current financial year may constitute exclusion and inequalities and ultimately adversely affect teaching and learning which may have serious implications for school leadership. Some fee paying schools, for example, may be forced to retrench School Governing Body paid teachers and support staff which may constrain the diversity of the curriculum and even extracurricular programmes. Such a scenario may ultimately impact on equal accessibility to equal quality of education. I believe that these issues which are embedded in these school categorisations of fee paying and no fee paying schools may impact on leadership experiences of principals in such schools.

In the context of the above, it becomes clear that leadership in fee paying and no fee paying schools contend with different sets of realities which may ultimately shape their experiences of leading within these categorisations. Most scholarship on fee paying and no fee paying schools focus on the implementation of these policies rather than the leadership experiences (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009; Naong, 2013; Nordstrum, 2012; Pampallis, 2008; Sayed & Motala, 2012). This, therefore, presents a gap regarding how and what the principals experience in leading such schools since this area seems to have not been researched thus far. Hence, this study intended to examine the experiences of leading fee paying and no fee paying schools through the voices of principals and whether these categorisations may shape their experiences.

### **1.3 Significance for the study**

This study may contribute to national, continental and possibly international educational discourse on leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools. It also seeks to kindle debate and further research on the experiences of leading these schools and how principals, through their leadership experiences, may confront their realities in order to enhance school effectiveness. This study may also motivate the school principals to engage all stakeholders regarding their leadership experiences with the intention of enhancing organisational learning and development. Further, this study will make findings and recommendations that may benefit all the stakeholders in the school community by enhancing their understanding of the policies governing these two categorisations and the unique experiences of their leadership. The principals' leadership experiences needs to be appreciated within the context of the school categorisation within which their schools fall. Consequently, the Department of Education may utilise the findings of the study to



ameliorate or re-model the policy provisions of fee paying and no fee paying schools in order to alleviate the realities posed by these school categorisations on leadership. Given the above, this is the gap that this study sought to explore.

#### **1.4 Aim and objectives of the study**

The aim of this study is to explore the leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools. It seeks to attain the following objectives:

- To examine the leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools.
- To explore the leadership challenges that the principals experience in fee and no fee paying schools.
- To determine how principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools mitigate the leadership challenges they experience.

#### **1.5 Critical questions**

Collectively, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the principals' leadership experiences in fee and no fee paying schools?
- What are the leadership challenges (if any) that the principals experience in fee and no fee paying schools?
- How do principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools mitigate the leadership challenges they experience?

#### **1.6 Definition of operational concepts**

The following terms will be defined to ensure a uniformed understanding of their meaning in this study: leadership, fee paying school and no fee paying school.

##### **1.6.1 Leadership**

Clarke (2007) asserts that leadership is about direction and purpose. These may be manifested in and articulated by the mission statement and vision of the school. What takes centre stage in various definitions of leadership is that it involves the influence process (Bush, 2011). This process also involves leaders and followers, which in this context involves school leadership, teachers, learners and other stakeholders in the school community. Further, leadership

involves planning the organisational direction and the quest to inspire others to follow that direction in order to enhance school effectiveness (Davies, 2009). In my view, leadership influences all stakeholders in the school to take a particular path which seeks to accomplish the set educational outcomes. Leadership and management are interwoven. They are critical ingredients towards the success of a school (Clarke, 2007). Management is that facet of leadership which entails the efficient operation of the school in the face of internal and external environmental factors as well as the school's short term planning (Davies, 2009). Furthermore, management is focused on the attainment of particular educational objectives (Bush & Middlewood, 2013). For the aforesaid to be achieved, in my view, management needs to coordinate the actions of all stakeholders towards the realisation of organisational goals. In this study, in a case where leadership is mentioned, management will be subsumed.

### **1.6.2 Fee paying schools**

Fee paying schools refer to the least poor schools which are measured by the socioeconomic circumstances of the schools' surrounding community. These schools are allowed to charge mandatory school fees based on the resolution taken by the majority of parents in an annual school's budget meeting. Fee paying schools are ranked quintiles 4 and 5 (Department of Education, 2006).

### **1.6.3 No fee paying schools**

No fee paying schools refer to the poorest schools which are measured by the socioeconomic circumstances of the schools' surrounding community. Such schools are not allowed to charge mandatory school fees. No fee paying schools fall under quintiles 1 to 3 (Department of Education, 2006). In some literature, no fee paying schools are referred to as fee free schools (Motala & Sayed, 2009; Rosser & Joshi, 2013; Williams, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014). Therefore, this study may use the concepts of no fee paying schools and fee free schools interchangeably.

## **1.7 Chapter Outline**

This study comprises five chapters: chapters one to five. In titling each of the chapters I make use of the metaphor of an aeroplane flight. I have chosen an aeroplane flight because this metaphor aptly captures my experience of operationalising this dissertation; the ups, downs and sometimes turbulent experiences.

**Chapter One** provides a general background and orientation to key issues of this study. The chapter introduces the study by highlighting the advent of fee paying and no fee paying schools and emergent issues in the policy. It then presents the problem statement and the rationale for the study. The chapter also provides the aim and objectives and critical questions informing this study followed by a definition of operational concepts used in the study.

**Chapter Two** focuses on the literature reviewed with regard to the critical questions. As its point of departure, it discusses the theoretical framework employed in this study. This study is underpinned by the Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT). The realities that fee paying and no fee paying schools contend with, regarding principals' leadership experiences, are discussed. This review of literature presents national, continental and international literature.

**Chapter Three** focuses on the research design and methodology used in this study. It discusses issues relating to methodology. The chapter provides an account on data generation methods, sampling, data analysis and ethical issues. It also presents how trustworthiness was addressed in this study and the limitations of the study conclude this chapter.

**Chapter Four** focuses on the findings of the study. The discussion of the findings is presented in terms of the theoretical framework and related literature discussed in chapter two.

**Chapter Five** presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study which are based on the findings discussed in chapter four.

### **1.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the introduction and orientation to the study, rationale for the study and significance of the study. This was followed by the aim and objectives and critical questions which guide this study. Leadership, fee paying schools and no fee paying schools were discussed as key operational concepts in the study. The chapter has also outlined the structure of all five chapters of this study.

The next chapter will present the theoretical framework and the review of related literature.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **DRAWING ON EXPERIENCED PILOTS TO NAVIGATE THIS FLIGHT**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter One introduced the study by presenting the background which contextualises the advent of fee paying and no fee paying schools in South Africa. It presented the legislative and policy framework which sanctions these school categorisations with the intention of providing equal access to equal quality of education. It further highlighted that the principals leading these schools may be confronted with different realities which may ultimately influence their experiences of leading in these aforesaid school categorisations.

This chapter is divided into two core sections. The first section deals with the theoretical framework of this study. The second section deals with the reviewed literature on leadership experiences of principals in the no fee paying and fee paying schools. The former will explain Complexity Leadership as a theory which underpins this study and subsequently present the origins of Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT). It will highlight the essential characteristics of the CLT. This section will also discuss how this study is framed within this theory. The latter will explore studies that have been conducted on the leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools. It will also examine how these leadership experiences influence these school categorisations.

#### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

“Qualitative researchers value theory as an overarching perspective assisting in attempts to integrate diverse findings and thoughts thereby coordinating and orchestrating our growing sense of richness of meaning” (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011, p. 313). This suggests that the theory provides all-encompassing lenses through which a study may be analysed and understood to enhance meanings. It structures and unfolds the sense-making process of the phenomenon that is being researched.

### **2.2.1 Understanding Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT)**

This study is underpinned by the Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT). CLT is a leadership framework which allows for learning, creativity and the capacity to adapt to “complex adaptive systems” (CAS) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge-orientated organisations (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007, p. 304). CAS are the basic unit of analysis in a complex system (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). In this context, a complex system refers to a school. CAS are changeable, nerve like network of collaborative, mutually dependent structures of stakeholders which are bound together in a joint venture by common objectives, needs and vision (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This refers to the legitimate structures and platforms of mutually dependent stakeholders within the school community who are committed to a common cause of the delivery of quality education. Stakeholders may refer to parents, teachers, learners, teacher unions, business sector or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In CAS, stakeholders, their actions and ideologies come into play in an unpredictable manner and changes emerge from such engagements. Consequently, CAS are real life, open systems and teams of collaborative stakeholders which may not be predicted.

### **2.2.2 Origins of CLT**

Models of leadership of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been characterised by top down, bureaucratic paradigms and their relevance may be questioned in the face of current organisational environment which is knowledge-based (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Such state of affairs demands a paradigmatic shift in leadership thinking from one that focuses on actions of individuals towards the view of organisations as CAS which create constant generation of knowledge and innovations. This new knowledge period generates diverse challenges for the organisation and its leadership. Consequently, CLT becomes the framework of leadership which enables learning, creative and adaptive capacity of CAS within the context of knowledge-based organisations. Based on the aforesaid, organisations today, including schools, are confronted by an era of complex landscape of knowledge propelled by globalisation and technology revolution. This era is characterised by knowledge becoming the main commodity and the swift-paced generation of knowledge and novelty becoming fundamental to the survival of the organisation.

CLT goes beyond the premise of bureaucracy by borrowing from complexity science which studies the behaviour of vast groups of interacting components which are potentially capable of evolving with time (Coveney, 2003). According to complexity science, from which CLT draws, organisations should adapt their level of complexity so that it is commensurate with the environment in which they operate. This suggests that educational landscape is characterised by the swift pace of curriculum changes, enhanced mandates for schools and the unpredictable nature of the public education funding model which result to multiple uncertainties which constitute complexities in the realm of educational practice, particularly for leadership. I believe that schools as organisations also function within competitive, complex and volatile environments which demand proportionate changes to ensure that they stay afloat despite aforesaid realities.

### **2.2.3 Characteristics of CLT**

Based on CAS, CLT proposes that leadership need not be perceived only as position and authority but also as an emerging, interacting dynamic; an intricate interchange wherein a collaborative drive for action and change surface when diverse stakeholder collectively engage one another in their structures and platforms with the intention of generating new ways of conducting their business. This indicates that leadership becomes a critical ingredient in ensuring that change becomes an integral part of organisational effectiveness instead of being an episodic inevitability. I believe that school leadership, particularly the principal, need to steer the stakeholder collective towards the direction of accomplishing the vision and mission of the school within the ambit of the law and relevant policies and regulations.

The Law of Requisite Complexity, adapted from complexity science, states that it takes complexity to defeat complexity, which suggests that a system or organisation must possess complexity equivalent to that of its environment in order to function effectively (McKelvey & Boisot, 2003). This law improves the capacity of the system or organisation to generate innovations since it unleashes the potential of nerve like, co-dependent stakeholder structures in their quest for optimising organisational complexity. In my view, this suggests that fee paying and no fee paying schools need to define their identities and set academic targets, for example, in the context of policies relevant to their categorisations which constitute complexity. Understanding and defining their identities and targets within these parameters suggest that these schools possess complexity or capacity which may enable them to

intercept, anticipate and counteract their unique challenges. Such a scenario may indicate that these organisations have corresponding level of complexity to defeat their complexities.

CLT is not grounded on bureaucratic structures but in complexity. Therefore, the focus of leadership is viewed within the context of dynamic fluidity of structures of interactive stakeholders. It is within this context that CLT distinguishes between leadership and leaders. CLT views leadership as an evolving, collaborative dynamic/phenomenon capable of producing adaptable results and leaders are viewed as individuals who are influencing such a dynamic, and results thereof (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This refers to a collaborative change drive arising from interactions of stakeholders which is influenced by school leadership, particularly the principal, towards a particular direction. This leadership framework envisages three functions of leadership which are: adaptive, administrative and enabling leadership. Adaptive leadership refers to adaptable, innovative and learning actions that evolve from the engagements and collaborations of CAS as they endeavour to adapt to challenges (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). The school categorisations, for example, in the South African schooling system, mean that the school principal and the stakeholders need to define their roles, their schools and the execution of their mandates within the context of their categorisation. This also means that their collaborative engagements need to be premised within the scope of their applicable categorisation. Administrative leadership refers to the actions of individuals and teams in formal managerial positions who plan and coordinate actions to accomplish organisational goals efficiently and effectively (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). The School Management Team (SMT), which consists of the principal, deputy principal/s and the Heads of Department, need to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

Consequently, in a no fee school, for example, they need to execute this duty with an understanding that they may not use state funding allocations per learner to hire additional teachers while they are also duty bound to ensure that they fulfil their mandate. Lastly, enabling leadership aims to create conducive conditions in which adaptive leadership can flourish and to regulate the entanglement between administrative leadership (bureaucratic) and adaptive leadership (emergent) functions of the organisations (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). In CLT the three aforesaid functions of leadership are interwoven hence the concept of entanglement. Entanglement refers to the dynamic relationship between the bureaucratic forces and CAS in organisations. Other than the SMT's day to day responsibilities they need to ensure that the entanglement between bureaucracy and the emerging educational realities

like fee paying school policy, born out of the rapid pace of change thereby constituting complexity school leadership, is harmonised for the school to be able to deliver on its mandate. One way of harmonising this entanglement is ensuring that the stakeholders who constitute CAS are empowered regarding their jurisdiction to avoid overlapping and conflict. Such state of affairs constitutes enabling leadership. Consequently, this theory is appropriate for this study since it maintains that leadership is characterized by complexity which emanates from the rapidly changing interactions, policies and regulations, technologies and effects of globalisation in the realm of educational practice.

#### **2.2.4 Framing the study within CLT**

The stakeholders in the school community constitute the complex adaptive systems (CAS) which are co-dependent and inevitably bound together by common goals and objectives. The principal needs to coordinate the actions of all stakeholders and ensure that they are aligned with the mission statement and vision of the school as well as the provisions of the legislation and policies applicable to their school categorisation. Consequently, the interactions within the CAS need to breed realistic, adaptable and innovative responses and solutions to the unique realities or challenges of each school. Facilitating the process of breeding such emergent changes commensurate with the complexities the school confronts is leadership, which the CLT refers to as adaptive leadership driven by enabling leadership. This becomes a complexity-driven and complexity-generative scenario which demands complexity leadership. In a no fee paying school, for example, this enabling leadership may manifest itself in a context where the principal sets up a committee responsible for the school fundraising drives with the intention of supplementing the school's financial resources. Deducing from this, leadership and CAS are context embedded which suggests that they are based on the nature of collaborative engagements and interdependence amongst the stakeholders and within a particular environment. Based on the above; CLT views leadership as existing in, and as a function of, interaction (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This suggests that leadership does not exist in a vacuum; it is embedded in the stakeholder interactions which unfold within the prescripts of relevant school categorisation.

It is in this context that CLT differentiates between leadership and leaders. In a fee paying school, when the principal and other stakeholders devise strategies of retrieving outstanding school fees, that constitutes leadership since it is an “emergent, interactive dynamic”



producing adaptable solutions (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, p. 299). Leaders are individual stakeholders who, through their actions, influence the process (emergent, interactive dynamic) of devising methods of recovering unpaid school fees from parents. This paradigmatically shifts the focus away from individual actions to the interplay of dynamics of the complex adaptive systems comprising leadership. This shift becomes a possibility through enabling leadership which serves as a catalyst of the environment within which adaptable results may be produced. This indicates that schools today have to contend with constant complexities due to the rapidly changing realm of educational practice. Consequently, all the issues discussed above constitute and contribute to complexity which constitutes complexity leadership since the school leadership, particularly the principals, are duty-bound to effectively interact with these complexities in order to deliver on their mandate.

## **2.3 Review of related literature**

This section presents national, continental and international literature on the experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools. This literature review will be presented according to the following themes: the policy landscape regarding fee free and fee paying schools, the principals' realities in these school categorisations, constraints in leading fee paying and fee free schools and the role of leadership, particularly the principals, amidst such constraints.

### **2.3.1 The policy landscape: Fee paying and no fee paying schools**

The right to education and the responsibility of the state to finance such right are enshrined in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 108 of 1996*. It stipulates that “everyone has the right to basic education, including adult education and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible” (RSA, 1996b, sec. 29). SASA stipulates that the state should equitably finance public schooling from public funds to ensure that the inequalities of the past are redressed (RSA, 1996a, sec. 34). These aforesaid principles, consequently underpin the enactment of national norms and standards for school funding. The aim of this funding model is the attainment of redress and equity in the financing of education with the intention of increasingly enhancing the quality of education, particularly in previously disadvantaged schools (Department of Education, 2006). This redistributive approach to school funding is pro-poor and is aligned with both the

constitutional obligations of the state to enhance access to education and the commitment of the RSA to a number of regional and international conventions to reduce poverty through enhanced access to quality education (Department of Education, 2006). Therefore, this ANNSSF is underpinned by the commitment of the Department of Education to the global goals of Education for All (EFA) (Department of Education, 2006). This indicates that the RSA subscribes to the global development of education policy imperatives. It is also in this spirit that the ANNSSF declares some schools as fee paying and others as no fee paying.

Given the reality that the academic school year (January to December) and the state fiscal year (April to March) are different (Department of Education, 2006), delays in the transfer of resource allocations are inevitable. The final school allocation is only determined during the course of that current school year which happens after the provincial legislatures have approved the budget for the Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) (Department of Education, 2006). In the face of these delays it becomes difficult for the schools to ensure that effective teaching and learning materialises right from the beginning of the school year. This may derail the quest of the school to execute its mandate and to provide quality public education. It is my contention that the misalignment of academic school and state fiscal years may translate into dire lack of resources and diminished capacity of the school to drive its own academic and co-curricular programmes. Such state of affairs may unfold to the detriment of teacher and learner performance thereby hindering the quest to maximise the potential of the school to deliver quality service. In no fee paying schools this scenario may be aggravated by the reality that they may not have any other source of revenue as it is the case with their fee paying counterparts where such a scenario is mitigated by generation of private revenue, particularly in the form of school fees.

School allocation is determined through the ranking of schools on a poverty index which is translated into national quintile for public schools ranging from quintile 1, which is the poorest, to quintile 5, which is the least poor (Department of Education, 2006). Calculating the individual school allocation for each year, the PDEs should multiply the applicable per learner target amount of the school's designated quintile by the current school enrolment (Department of Education, 2006). This suggests that small schools with low enrolments receive lesser allocations than their bigger counterparts which may pose fiscal challenges since these schools' allocations may not necessarily be adequate despite the smaller number of learners. As similarly argued by Ohba (2011), I argue that the higher the learners' grades,

the more expensive their educational costs become; a scenario which may have financial implications for the smaller schools given the formula applied to determine school allocations. This school allocation, which is transferred directly into the school's bank account, should cover recurrent, non-personnel expenditure as it is explicitly stated that it may not be used to cover personnel costs and construction of new buildings (Department of Education, 2006). Such provisions may limit the scope of the utilisation of these fiscal resources thereby defeating the ends of the rationale for the enactment of a funding model which seeks to redress inequalities of the past.

The ANNSSF provides guidelines for the breakdown of the school allocation which ring-fences some percentages for particular educational inputs, for example, a substantial percentage of the allocation should be utilised to procure Learner-Teacher Support Material (LTSM) (Department of Education, 2006). If a school deviates from the recommendations of the PDE regarding the breakdown of allocation, particularly when such deviation constrains educational inputs, the PDE may invoke the provisions of section 22 of SASA which deals with the withdrawal of SASA section 21 functions (Department of Education, 2006). The ring-fencing may have noble intentions however; it may restrain the school from progressively responding to its realities thereby rendering the remainder of the school allocation comparatively not adequate to cover other non-personnel expenditure depending on the fiscal capacity of the school. Paradoxically, I argue, this funding policy may constrain its own quest to redress the inequities and inequalities inherited from the apartheid regime if schools are not enabled to directly target their own unique backlogs and challenges in order to attain parity with their counterparts. Consequently, this may contribute to the widening of the disparities regarding the capacity of schools to provide quality public education.

Prior to 2006, there was no adequacy benchmark since the previous funding model did not set any minimum for per learner funding allocations. With the advent of the ANNSSF quintile three is considered to be the adequacy benchmark (Department of Education, 2006). This suggests that this quintile should provide minimum resources package in terms of the necessary educational services and goods which may enable the schools to provide minimum service level towards realising the learners' constitutional right to education. This adequacy benchmark which is set by the Department of Education (Mestry, 2014), I argue, may not necessarily translate into adequate resource allocation for individual schools in reality since, for example, schools in rural and urban areas may not contend with the same levels of

poverty and backlogs. Therefore, what may be minimally adequate in one school may not necessarily be the case with another school which, for example, has been confronted with under-resourcing even prior to 1994. Furthermore, I also argue that there has not been any consensus regarding what needs to constitute adequacy benchmark in terms of resource allocation; what requisite minimum resources the schools should possess in order to be regarded as adequately resourced.

As Nordstrum (2012) similarly argues, I argue whether the national quintile system effectively targets the legitimate beneficiaries of the ANSSSF which are the historically disadvantaged, marginalised and dispossessed learners. The factors which are considered in the ranking of schools are income of the household, unemployment and literacy levels of the community which is the schools' catchment area (Department of Education, 2006). Different households in the community may contend with different levels of poverty ranging from the poorest to the least poor. Given the freedom of school choice, some parents may decide to enrol their children in schools beyond the bounds of their own community. Consequently, since the quintile rankings target a specific area not individual learners, this system may ultimately benefit the least poor as they may inadvertently benefit from the level of funding intended for the poorest in that particular school. This suggests that for individual learners to benefit maximally from the per learner funding allocations which this system considers to be commensurate with their levels of poverty, they may be compelled to remain within the bounds of their own communities. Such state of affairs constrains school choice and it defeats the ends of the principles that underpin this funding model. In my view, pro-poor and efficient funding policies need to target individual households or learners irrespective of their school choice.

Further, it is my contention that the factors that are taken into consideration in the ranking of schools into quintiles may be marred by flaws and inconsistencies; an argument similarly advanced by Mestry (2014). The least poor school located in a well-off community may not necessarily serve learners from its own neighbourhood, given the freedom of school choice. This suggests that the learners who may be from the poor communities may be partially deprived of the funding particularly intended for them since they are enrolled in a "wrong" school which is classified as the least poor by virtue of being located in a well-off area regardless of who it actually serves. This constitutes direct contradictions to the realities of these individual learners; the least poor school with the socioeconomic status of the learner

population not relatively commensurate with its (school) categorisation. For instance, instead of the poorest learners enrolled in the least poor schools receiving per learner funding allocations intended for the poorest quintile one schools, they qualify for funding levels designated for the least poor quintile four or five schools which may further entrench the inequalities. The two schools that I have identified for this study are located in the same township however, one is fee paying and the other is no fee paying. This ironically suggests that though these schools are situated in the same township, the poverty indicators of the community they serve are varied; with one section being advantaged and the other being the least advantaged. Therefore, questions may arise regarding the reliability and consistency of the criteria that has been applied in the ranking of these two schools. Such state of affairs mirrors that the school quintile ranking system is inconsistent which may render per learner funding allocations flawed as it is determined through this system. This scenario indicates that this system may fail to alleviate the inequalities which further engenders the cycle of poor quality of education.

SASA stipulates that learners should not be denied access to education if their parents cannot afford to pay school fees (RSA, 1996a, sec. 41). This seeks to remove financial barriers thereby enhancing equal access to education. It is in this spirit that the fee exemptions policy is embedded in this ANSSSF. This policy provides for the automatic and partial or full fee exemptions. The former is granted to any learners who have been orphaned or abandoned by their parents and any learners who receive government social grants related to poverty (Department of Education, 2006). The latter, full or partial fee exemption is granted on the basis of household income compared to current school fees and other education related spending. The extent to which these exemptions afford poor learners access to education is questionable since they only cover tuition fees. Learners contend with other indirect educational costs such as transport, uniform or educational excursions which may also consume a substantial portion of the poor households' income relative to other living expenses. Given the above context, for these learners it may be difficult to sustain their regular school attendance which undermines the purpose of the fee exemptions. Furthermore, SASA stipulates that the SGBs may institute litigation against parents who have failed to pay school fees (RSA, 1996a, sec. 41). This constitutes paradoxes. On the one hand, learners should not be denied access to education due to parents' inability to pay school fees. On the other hand, parents who fail to pay fees may face legal action. These paradoxes highlight the reality that these provisions fail to acknowledge that the fee paying schools also enrol the

poorest learners. It is my contention that the SGBs' right to litigate may constitute a barrier denying learners access to what they may perceive as quality education in these schools; which ultimately constrains the scope of the freedom of school choice. Hence, the argument that the funding model needs to target individual learners not surrounding school communities (Nordstrum, 2012). In addition, the schools may be reluctant to grant fee exemptions since this may be considered as loss of revenue which the school may either not be able to recoup at the beginning of the school year or it may take longer for the Department of Education to compensate the school while the core business of the school is being compromised.

No fee schools may not charge mandatory school fees however, if they do not receive school allocations which are equivalent to the no fee threshold they may levy school fees to retrieve the amount equivalent to the difference between the actual allocations schools received and the no fee threshold (Department of Education, 2006; RSA, 1996, sec. 37). Fee free schools, I argue, may not be always free given the reality of rising educational costs and budget austerities of some economies, particularly the emerging economies. This sharpens the contradictions that, on the one hand, the no fee schools intend to cater for the poorest learners while on the other hand, they may also charge school fees as a contingency measure. This policy waiver may pose a serious threat to the quest for universal access to quality education which may further widen the inequalities and funding gaps between the historically disadvantaged and the previously advantaged, the poorest and the least poor schools. This may raise questions regarding the realisation of the constitutional right to education and the sustainability of fee free schools in some quarters.

### **2.3.2 Principals' realities in no fee paying and fee paying schools**

Engaging with related literature, I have observed that most scholarship seem to focus on fee free primary education (Akech & Simatwa, 2010; Akyeampong, 2009; Nishimura, Ogawa, Sifuna, Chimombo, Kunje, Ampiah, Byamugisha, Sawamura & Yamada, 2009) which has been introduced in a number of countries globally. Consequently, this seems to suggest that research on primary education regarding fee charging public primary schools and research on secondary education regarding both fee free as well as fee paying public secondary schools, is insufficient.

### **2.3.2.1 Funding of public schooling system**

The logic fundamental to the removal of school fees in public schools by some governments of sub-Saharan African countries is to eliminate financial barriers and increase access to education for the poorest (Nishimura et al., 2009; Nordstrum, 2012). This removal of fees is replaced by funding through capitation grants (Nishimura et al., 2009) which in South Africa are referred to as school allocations (Sayed & Motala, 2012). The capitation grants or school allocations are calculated and apportioned in the form of per learner funding allocations in each school. These school allocations are either deposited directly into schools' bank accounts in some countries like Ghana, Kenya and South Africa or via districts in others, like Uganda (Nishimura et al., 2009; Nordstrum, 2012). This requires the principals to have financial management skills which may assist them to utilise public funds efficiently to the optimal benefit of their schools. Schools need to spend their allocations within the parameters of the policy framework set by state or the relevant departments (Nishimura et al., 2009) which, in my view, may fail to target the unique needs of each school. In Madagascar the capitation grant received from the government should not be utilised to pay teachers' salaries (Lesne, 2013). In South Africa, like her counterpart Madagascar, such a policy framework also exists which stipulates that the state funds should not be used for personnel expenditure (Department of Education, 2006). Therefore, this suggests that state funding must be used for operational costs like maintenance, stationery, water and electricity and LTSM. In such a case, principals need to find means of generating revenue which may assist them in fulfilling this obligation of paying additional teachers not employed by the state.

In South Africa it is further stipulated in annual policy guidelines that the school should spend 60% of its total allocation on LTSM which is distributed as follows: 40% to be spent on textbooks, 30% on other LTSM and 30% on learner stationery while 40% of the total allocation should be spent on non-LTSM which is distributed as follows: 20% on repairs and maintenance, 30% on office furniture and equipment, 20% on consumable items and 30% on domestic and security services (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2014b). In Uganda, the policies which govern the utilisation of capitation grants stipulates that approximately 50% needs to be used on LTSM, 35% on co-curricular programmes, 15% on maintenance of physical facilities and 5% on administrative costs (Zuze & Leibbrandt, 2011). While in Rwanda the guidelines stipulate that approximately 50% need to be spent on LTSM, 35% on building construction and repairs and 15% on teacher development (Transparency

International, 2012). From the above guidelines it may be deduced that in some countries between 50% and 60% of the total school allocation needs to be spent on LTSM which is directly linked to the process of teaching and learning. This indicates the emphasis that is placed on the critical role of the LTSM in the core business of the school, teaching and learning. These guidelines may fail to target the unique day to day operational challenges of the school, for example, the school may have sufficient textbooks for the current academic year while it contends with inadequate funds for repairs and maintenance. It may then constitute an infringement of the provisions to re-channel textbooks funds to repairs and maintenance where they are needed the most. This suggests that the principals are required to comply with the terms of the policy framework which regulates school allocations at the expense of the immediate needs of their schools. Non-compliance and deviations may lead the PDEs to withdraw some of the SASA section 21 functions (Department of Education, 2006). Such aforesaid state of affairs may have implications for leadership and subsequently, the capacity of the school to deliver on its mandate.

Further, the elimination of fees constitutes the loss of revenue in the form of school fees in fee paying schools. In addition, in some cases, school fees alone may generate more revenue than that which is received from the government (Lesne, 2013); a reality which may pose budgetary constraints for the school leadership. What determines the amount to be paid to each school in Uganda are the enrolment and the learner's grade level (Zuze & Leibbrandt, 2011). This is partially in contrast with South African practice where in both school categorisations the enrolment, quintile ranking and the target amount applicable in each category are the determinants of the school allocation (Department of Education, 2006), not learners' grades. This translates into reality that the larger the enrolment and in some countries, the higher the learners' grades, the bigger the amount of state funds they will receive; a scenario which may have consequences for leadership. Further, in South Africa the no fee threshold is determined by the national Department of Education (Department of Education, 2006) which is similar to Ugandan practice wherein the threshold cost, as it is referred to in Uganda, is determined by the government (Nishimura et al., 2009). In essence, the principals have to contend with all the realities which emanate from this approach since the threshold cost or no fee threshold may fail to accommodate the individuality of each school and schools may not have a voice in the determination of their threshold cost.



Furthermore, in Indonesia, the government has introduced the Minimum Service Standards (Rosser & Joshi, 2013) while in South Africa quintile 3 is considered to be the adequacy benchmark for the provision of education, particularly the per learner funding allocations (Department of Education, 2006). This suggests that schools need to ensure that the service they provide meets the minimum service level required which, in some cases, may not be met through the state funds allocated to each school. In addition, in South Africa, fee paying schools receive allocations which are less than the adequacy benchmark (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009). This may create funding disparities should the generated private revenue (school fees) fail to provide these schools with the capacity to meet the adequacy benchmark requirements. Such failure may be attributed to, *inter alia*, the amount of school fees to be paid depending on the location of the school and who it services, ability of the parents to pay such fees and the delay or inability of the Department of Education to pay compensation for the fee exemptions granted by the school. This state of affairs may exert pressure on the leadership, particularly the principals, to devise strategies that may enable the school to provide the minimum service level as per the relevant policy requirements. Nonetheless, the aforesaid no fee policy has had considerable implications for school enrolments.

### **2.3.2.2 Surges in school enrolments**

There has been a remarkable upsurge in learner enrolments in a number of countries which have eliminated school fees in public primary schools to introduce free primary education. In Malawi the enrolment rates almost doubled as they rose from 1.6 million in 1993 to 3 million in 1994 (Omwami & Keller, 2010) while in Uganda it increased from 3 million in 1996 to a remarkable 7.5 million in 2007 (Ogawa et al., 2009). In Madagascar the number of learners enrolled in primary schools after the introduction of fee free education rose from 2.8 million in 2002/2003 to 4.3 million in 2008/2009 (UNICEF, 2012). This indicates that the increases in school enrolments have become a common phenomenon in a number of countries with the advent of fee free education. However, question arises regarding whether the public schooling system has the capacity to accommodate these substantial surges in enrolments. Such unprecedented developments may pose constraints to the principals regarding the capacity of their schools' physical, financial and human resources. In an attempt to alleviate the impact of such developments the principals may overstretch, the sometimes already overloaded, school resources which may ultimately compromise the delivery of quality education.

Furthermore, in Ghana, when free basic education was launched the learner-qualified teacher ratio increased from 43:1 in 1996 to 63:1 in 2005 (Akyeampong, 2009). This may have implications for the principals' leadership realities and for both the teachers' and learners' academic performance. Such an increase in ratio may marginalise some learners thus hindering effective teaching and learning. Contrary to Ghana scenario, in South Africa fee paying schools may use school fees, not state funds, to hire the services of additional teachers (Pampalis, 2008; Ahmed & Sayed, 2009) in order to reduce the learner-teacher ratio thereby rendering the quest for enhanced quality education a possibility. The question may arise regarding whether the principals and their schools may be able to effectively deliver on their mandate if the availability of qualified teachers is not commensurate with the rapidly increasing levels of enrolment. However, one of the main achievements of the fee free primary education policies is the provision of LTSM which translates, partly, into learner-textbook ratio of 2:1 as compared to 15:1 before the introduction of these policies (Nishimura et al., 2009). This may culminate in learners having fair access to learner support resources. Consequently, such availability of resources may assist the schools leadership, particularly the principals, in the execution of their mandate to deliver quality education and enhance learners' educational experiences. At this point it becomes important though to highlight that the surge in primary school enrolments has impacted on the demand for secondary education.

### **2.3.2.3 Demand for secondary education**

With the advent of free primary education in Kenya, there has been an increased demand for secondary education which is reportedly more severe in metropolitan areas (Orodho, 2014). This suggests that more learners are able to complete primary education and progress to secondary education both in rural and urban areas which may have not been the case previously. Such a scenario may reflect the reality that secondary school education costs may thwart poor learners from attending secondary schools (Vavrus & Moshi, 2009). However, the limited number of secondary schools constrains growth in the rate of enrolment at this level since it does not match the number of primary schools or it fails to accommodate the prospective secondary school learners (Orodho, 2014). This phenomenon has also been reported in Uganda whereby in 2003 there were 18 081 public primary schools and 3660 public and 641 private secondary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2005). This therefore indicates that there has not been a balance between the number of primary and secondary schools which suggests that the number of learners who completed primary education and enrolled

for secondary education has been low pre-fee free education, hence the lower number of secondary schools. Such a phenomenon may culminate in some secondary schools being overcrowded, some learners being excluded and in some instances, some dropping out of school which constitutes a principal's reality since it may infringe on the learners' right to education.

Furthermore, this may overburden the school's infrastructural capacity and resources, for example, lack of floor space or insufficient laboratory equipment, which may have adverse consequences for the culture of teaching and learning. Such developments may have also been influenced by the policy of universal or subsidised secondary education that was launched in Uganda in 2007 (Asankha & Takashi, 2011) and subsequently, in Kenya in 2008 in order to cut learning costs (Nyangia & Orodho, 2014) thereby potentially enhancing access to secondary education. Since the launch of this policy there has been a considerable surge in the enrolment rate in public secondary schools, particularly for girls from the poorest households (Asankha & Takashi, 2011). This suggests that free secondary education may become a vehicle through which gender disparities can be alleviated in the public schooling system which Asankha & Takashi (2011) cite as one of the key educational challenges in African countries. Given such state of affairs, I believe that the principals have a critical role to play in enhancing the narrowing of gender disparities regarding learner attendance and retention within the enabling policy framework of universal access to education.

#### **2.3.2.4 Expansion of access to education**

Though a number of African countries have launched fee free primary education, the levying of mandatory school fees in secondary schools remain a common alternative for various governments in Africa with the intention of expanding access (Ohba, 2011). Mestry (2014) concurs with Ohba (2011) when he observes that a number of countries still charge school fees in one form or another despite global initiatives to eliminate such fees. In South Africa, like in some of her African counterparts, the principle underlying the existence of fee paying schools alongside no fee schools is to enable the state to make more funds available to the poorest schools thereby redressing inequities and enhancing access to education (Department of Education, 2006). This emphasises the reality that state funding may be inadequate or the state may lack the fiscal muscle to cover the full costs of schooling within the scope of fee paying and no fee policies. It may be in this context that in Rwanda, it is gazetted that fee

free education does not exonerate parents from contributing towards their children's education (Williams, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014). Such a stipulation endorses the cost sharing initiatives a school may adopt to supplement central funding which may ironically expand access in some quarters and constrain it in others. Hence, they are required to provide their children with learning material, support teacher development and contribute to the building of schools; though these may not be used to exclude (Williams, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014). It is the principal who needs to maintain the balance between ensuring that parents fulfil their responsibilities and avoiding exclusion of other learners in the face of escalating fiscal demands on the school treasury. Parents are required to pay Parent Teacher Association (PTA) contributions which are determined by the parent community at each school (Williams, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014). Similarly, in South Africa school fees are determined by the majority of parents in the school's annual budget meeting (RSA, 1996a, sec. 39). These contributions serve as, in some cases, supplementary to teachers' salaries (Williams, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014) which may be perceived as a means to retain teachers' services thereby enhancing access to education. Similar practice is prevalent in South Africa where fee paying schools, with permission, may utilise school fee revenue in supplementing teachers' salaries, particularly those performing extra responsibilities or considered valuable (Department of Education, 2006). This indicates that it becomes the responsibility of the principals to ensure that parents pay these contributions to assist the school in meeting its contractual obligations. In fulfilling this responsibility, the principals may sharpen the contradictions when, on the one hand, in theory, they lead no fee schools while on the other hand, they demand parents to pay contributions, which, technically, should be voluntarily paid. Nonetheless, in Africa recently, few countries have decided to extend fee free education to secondary education to enhance access for learners who have completed their primary education, for example, it was introduced in Rwanda in 2006 and Uganda in 2007 (Ohba, 2011). In my view, this may be inevitable if the country intends to retain the gains, in terms of enrolments, retention, completion and enhanced access, made through free primary education. Therefore, the introduction of free secondary education may enhance educational opportunities for learners who otherwise could not have afforded secondary education. However, these policies may pose challenges for the principals of both fee free and fee paying schools.

### **2.3.3 Constraints in leading no fee and fee paying schools**

Different schools, irrespective of their categorisation, may contend with different leadership challenges some of which are presented in this section.

#### **2.3.3.1 Quality of education**

In a study conducted in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique, it was found that the remarkable increases in school enrolments and elimination of local funding (school level) compromised provision of quality education, with the poorest learners invariably left in no better condition than they were prior to the advent of fee free schooling (World Bank, 2009). The above finding highlights two critical issues which may impact on principals' realities, namely, quality and adequacy of government funding allocated to schools. These two are, in my view, arguably inextricably linked since it may be potentially difficult for the principals to improve and sustain school quality without either sufficient state or private funding or both. However, this does not directly translate to adequate funding guaranteeing enhanced quality. Further, the principals have to contend with the inevitable soaring of school enrolments subsequent to elimination of school fees which results in overcrowding of classrooms. This overcrowding may have an adverse impact on the process of teaching and learning since it impedes the ability of the teacher to maximise effective delivery of the academic programmes (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). Such impediment may potentially derail the commitment of the principals and the schools to affording their learners access to uncompromised quality. These overcrowded classes become fertile ground for the spreading of different diseases such as tuberculosis (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). Such state of affairs may impact on learners' and teachers' performance since the prevalence of communicable diseases amongst some learners or teachers may also affect their regular attendance at school. Therefore, a combination of the two factors which are hampered teacher effectiveness and diseases may have devastating effects on the overall school performance and ultimately compromise the capacity of the school to provide quality public education. Such a compromise may become a serious indictment on the capacity of the principals to effectively execute their mandate.

Akyeampong (2009) and Somerset (2009) echo each other while Bold, Kimenyi, Mwabu & Sandefur (2010) concur with them when they posit that remarkable surges in school

enrolments and subsequent overcrowded classes result to poor quality of education in the public schooling system. Given this overcrowding, it may become impossible for the teacher to individualise learners' realities for optimal benefits from the teaching and learning process; a situation which may have serious repercussions on the achievement of quality educational outcomes. Relative to the overcrowding of classes due to increased enrolments, is the demand for qualified teachers since there needs to be a state of equilibrium regarding demand and supply of teachers (Akyeampong, 2009). This raises the argument that the availability of qualified teachers may determine the level of quality the school is capable of providing which may ultimately reflect on the learners' academic progress. Consequently, a combination of increased teacher-learner ratios and a decline in the supply of qualified teachers provides some logic regarding low and stagnant learner performance in Ghana (Akyeampong, 2009). This suggests that lack or insufficient supply of qualified teachers may hinder the learners' ability to maximise their performance which may further hinder attainment of quality results. This becomes a leadership challenge since principals may be expected to ameliorate such realities so that the school remains on the right path towards delivering on its mandate.

In South Africa, the majority of learners are confined to a poorly resourced system where there is neither private revenue nor supplementary income from parents (Patel & Hochfeld, 2010). This suggests that the removal of mandatory school fees may have inadvertent consequences which may ultimately compromise the level of quality that schools intend to provide. Such a scenario indicates that the loss of such revenue, in the form of school fees, and lack or unavailability of its replacement thereof, may adversely affect the various faculties of school life. Though the South African fee paying schools may be compensated for loss of revenue through fee exemptions granted (Department of Education, 2014), the process of applying for such compensation may be protracted which defeats the ends of the policy intentions to replace lost income to assist the principals in mitigating the demands of day to day school operations. A school that has previously been sufficiently resourced may become under-resourced due to the surge in the learner population thereby rendering existing resources insufficient.

It is within this context that the level of quality that public schools in Uganda provide remains contested or is being questioned though the government attempts to provide new subsidy to accommodate costs of educational provision (Asankha & Takashi, 2011). In the South African context, Mestry and Ndhlovu (2014) assert that it becomes ironical that there has

been a substantial increase in the financing of the poorest schools by the state however, enhancement of the quality of education and the performance of learners have not been achieved. Therefore, in South Africa and Uganda it becomes a common phenomenon that the increased school funding by the government is not accompanied by improved quality and learners' performance commensurate with level of funding. However, I argue that the injection of more funds to education does not necessarily culminate in better quality and performance as these may materialise through an interplay of various factors. This suggests that the implementation of fee free education or pro-poor education funding and the subsequent surge in enrolment has resulted in the exchange between equal accessibility and equal quality which may translate into access being achieved to the detriment of quality. Omwami and Keller (2010) assert that though the removal of school fees improves accessibility, it also increases the burden on the capacity of the schooling system infrastructure. The infrastructural capacity of the schools and availability of resources need to be commensurate with the surge in school enrolments if the quest for commitment to quality education is to materialise. Given the lack of such a balance, the anticipated slump in the provision of quality education, due to elimination of user fees, may drive well-to-do parents to withdraw their children from fee free public schools (Lesne, 2013). Removing their children from these schools may also change the landscape or demographics of learner population in these schools. This may also adversely impact on the parent-school partnership; a scenario which has implications for the principals. Relative to this issue, I argue that in some quarters paying higher school fees may be perceived as the benchmark of quality one may anticipate from the school or it may symbolise the potential of the school to progressively enhance the quality of education. Further, such anticipation (of a slump), in my view, may exert pressure on the school leadership, particularly the principal, to devise a turnaround strategy to allay fears of both existing and prospective parents and learners regarding counteracting the anticipated drop in quality levels subsequent to removal of fees.

### **2.3.3.2 Inadequacy of state funding**

Funding is a prerequisite for affording people accessibility to public education (Omwami & Keller, 2010). This suggests that governments need to have the fiscal capacity in order to realise their goals of universalising access to education. It becomes clear though that the governments of developing countries lack the fiscal muscle for funding education adequately despite the commitment of the global community to universalise basic education (Motala,

2009). Omwami and Keller (2010) echo Motala (2009) when they maintain that the economies of sub-Saharan African countries lack the capacity to provide universalised access to education despite these governments' commitment to global educational imperatives. This suggests that the funding of education by the state becomes inadequate which may impede effective and full implementation of either fee free or user fee education policies. This inadequacy of funds may mean that the intended beneficiaries of such policies do not necessarily benefit and even those who are believed to benefit from these policies are confronted by the reality of differential access and quality. Such state of affairs defeats the ends of the policy imperatives of affording every learner access to equal quality of education irrespective of their socioeconomic background. Given this context, the sustainability of these global educational policy imperatives may become questionable in developing countries which may breed uncertainty regarding the right to equal quality education. The above-mentioned issues may have serious implications for leadership since, in my view, it is leadership, particularly the principals, who need to lead means to bridge the gap between the inadequacy of state funds and provision of minimum service level, which is referred to as the adequacy benchmark in South Africa (Department of Education, 2006). I argue that some of the means that principals choose to utilise may not necessarily be within the ambit of the policy provisions which may render them illegal.

Given the above reality, even after the advent of fee free education in Indonesia, some public schools have to maintain the levying of school fees in order to ensure that the provision of education complies with the Minimum Service Standards set by the central government (Rosser & Joshi, 2013). These Minimum Service Standards may raise the bar regarding the prescribed levels that service providers (schools) need to adhere to in the execution of their mandate. This may culminate in additional financial burden on the already constrained fiscus of the school system. The prescribed minimum service level needs to be accompanied by the commensurate state funding adjustments if it is to materialise. Lack of such correspondence may compel the principals to develop a "contingency financing model" which seeks to narrow the funding gap between state funding allocations per learner and the Minimum Service Standards. It is within this context that due to inadequate state funding in Kenya, parents have been asked to pay PTA extra fees in order to maintain smooth functionality of the schools (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). Lesne (2013) concurs with Akech and Simatwa (2010) when he reports that though the government of Madagascar has introduced fee free primary education, the Parents Association is permitted to raise local revenue largely used to



pay the wage bill of contractual teachers and the remainder of which is used for construction of buildings and maintenance. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the principals to ensure that these levies are received by the school. This becomes a principal's challenge since some parents find it difficult to pay such extra fees and these fees may be seen to be defeating the ends of the rationale for fee free education. Such state of affairs may also constrain the scope of the universalised accessibility to basic education since in some quarters it may constitute exclusion.

These realities raise questions since these extra levies may consume a large portion of the poorest households' income which may impact on other living costs. This may fuel a hike in the poverty and drop out levels at schools amongst the children from these households. Some children may attend their classes on empty stomachs. Such a scenario may constitute a principals' challenge since it may impede concentration thus ultimately manifesting adversely in learners' holistic progress. However, in Rwanda PTA fees serve as supplementary to teachers' salaries (Ministry of Education & Concern Worldwide, 2009). It is the parent community in each school that decides on the PTA levy which differs from one school to another or from one region to another depending on geographical location (Williams, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014). Consequently, schools in affluent areas may decide on higher PTA levy than schools in less affluent areas (Williams, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014). There is evidence which suggests that teachers are inclined to migrate to schools, mainly in metropolitan areas, where parents are able to afford higher PTA fees (Paxton & Mutesi, 2012). Such migration may have serious implications for the process of teaching and learning in those areas where parents cannot afford higher PTA fees thereby rendering such schools unsustainable with regard to the execution of their core business. In my view, the principals in schools that are located in such areas may have to contend with constant shortage of teachers which may compromise the stability and functionality of these schools.

This is further aggravated by the reality that schools do not seem to have clearly defined procedures to deal with parents who fail to pay PTA costs (William, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014). Although it is gazetted that learners may not be excluded on the basis of failing to pay PTA fees or being unable to buy school uniform, there is no formal exemption policy for such eventualities (William, Abbot & Mupenzi, 2014). This may explain why children, in Kigali in Rwanda, whose poor parents have failed to pay PTA fees have been chased away from school (Paxton & Mutesi, 2012). This state of affairs may become fertile ground for

uncertainties and inconsistencies on the part of principals regarding how these issues are dealt with across schools. Such a scenario may ultimately disadvantage and exclude other learners which constitute a violation of their right to education, for example, when learners are denied access to the school for failing to pay national examination fees. South Africa, unlike her counterpart Rwanda, has a fee exemptions policy which sets out procedures for identifying parents who are *bona fide* beneficiaries of partial or full school fee exemption (Department of Education, 2006). SASA also prohibits exclusion on the grounds of the inability of parents to pay school fees (RSA, 1996a, sec. 5). It becomes the responsibility of principals to balance the equation of affording parents this right to apply for exemption while it is perceived to constitute potential loss of revenue for the schools.

### **2.3.3.3 Delaying state funding transfers**

It is reported that the delays in the transfer of state funds has become a common phenomenon in schools in Uganda, Malawi, Ghana and Kenya. These delays may take a month or in some cases the entire term and the amount of funding allocated to schools fluctuates (Nishimura et al., 2009). Akech & Simatwa (2010) concur with Nishimura et al. (2009) when they state that schools are confronted by delays in the transfer of state funds to their accounts which breeds fertile ground for uncertainties and translates into delays in the procurement of LTSM. The study conducted in South Africa echoes the above observations since Sayed and Motala (2012) found that schools were dissatisfied with the challenges emanating from the evident delay in the transfer of funds. In South Africa these delays are embedded in the incongruence of the academic school year and the state fiscal year. It becomes clear that in South Africa these delays may move beyond the end of the first term since the financial year of the state commences on 1 April while the academic school year commences on 1 January (Department of Education, 2006). Aggravating these delays is the reality that the final school allocations are only determined after the provincial legislatures have apportioned budget allocations for their PDEs. Such realities may impose constraints on the vision and mission statement of the school thereby potentially derailing some critical school operations. It therefore becomes important for state funding allocations to be transferred timeously to the schools for the principals to ensure uncompromised delivery of academic programmes. Failure to transfer timeously may inhibit the schools from procuring the necessary educational inputs in time. This state of affairs may adversely impact on the schools' short and medium term planning which has implications regarding how schools execute their core

business. I believe that lack of principals' planning resultant from failure or inability of the state to disburse funds timeously becomes a recipe for failure, loss or lack of direction and ineffectiveness. If the principal lacks direction compounded by fiscal constraints, it may translate into the entire institution operating without any direction or operational plan which may hinder progress and render it stagnant. Further, failure of the principals to secure the necessary resources at the beginning of each year or each term due to these delays in the disbursement of funds may disadvantage both learners and teachers thereby compromising the quality of the teaching and learning process.

#### **2.3.3.4 Re-emergence of school fees**

Experiences suggest that even though the elimination of school fees has led to the increase in the rate of enrolment at schools and relative decline in quality, there has been frequent subsequent re-emergence of school fees, resulting to increased drop out levels (Somerset, 2009). These experiences mirror the challenges regarding the sufficiency of state funds which are supposed to replace revenue formerly generated by school fees in order to maintain quality (Rosser & Joshi, 2013). The re-emergence of school fees becomes a stark reality in the face of financial vulnerability of schools arising from the state's lack of fiscal muscle to finance the public schooling system adequately. It becomes evident from the above assertions that this re-emergence may be driven by relative slump in quality provision or fear that the decline in quality is imminent due to inadequate financial resources; a scenario which challenges the principals to explore avenues to raise funds to fund the gap. However, this undermines the global commitment to universal access to quality education. Notwithstanding the benefits of universal access, it defeats the ends of universalising education if it is access without quality. It becomes empty, quantitative access since it may ultimately fail to narrow the quality gap, instead entrench the inequalities between the historically disadvantaged and the previously advantaged, the rich and the poor, in the public schooling system. These issues may logically justify the re-emergence of fees in some countries. It may be in the above context that in a study conducted in rural schools in Jamaica, it was found that the principals were compelled to filter policy prescripts and select those they perceived to be implementable given the realities their schools confronted (Miller, 2015). Principals may be reluctant to implement policies which do not speak directly to their realities. Consequently, they may deliberately implement policies selectively in attempt to ensure that their schools deliver on their mandate which may, for example, fuel the re-emergence of school fees in this instance.

In a fee paying school, the principal may deliberately withhold information from parents regarding fee exemptions in order to avert loss of revenue arising from such processes.

Even though there is a global campaign to eliminate school fees, a number of countries are levying fees in varying forms (Mestry, 2014). However, in South Africa, fiscal constraints are considered to have influenced the adoption of a financing model which provides for supplementary funding (Motala, 2009), school fees in the main, by the parent community to top up government resources. Consequently, in fee paying schools, it may not constitute re-emergence of school fees to charge fees. This indicates that the funding gap, prevalent in either fee free or fee paying schools due to either inadequate government funding or lack of private funding, needs to find replacement revenue or be narrowed in order to curb the re-emergence of school fees if universal access to education is to materialise. This re-emergence, even in the form of exorbitant fees in fee paying schools, undermines the global drive to enhance accessibility to quality education for every child. This effectively highlights inadequacy of state resource allocations which may raise questions regarding sustainability of and the extent to which these policies exclude poor learners in some countries. This is further aggravated by the reality that the amount of state funding allocations varies from time to time depending on the availability of funds at the national treasury (Nishimura et al., 2009). Therefore, there is lack of consistency since these allocations are not regulated by a capitation grant benchmark (Nishimura et al., 2009). This suggests that in the current academic year schools may receive grants which are lower than what was disbursed to them the previous year while educational costs are constantly escalating. Contending with this reality may compel some principals to devise sustainability strategies, some of which may not be within the ambit of the law or may be perceived to exclude the poorest. Experiences suggest that fee free education policy usually fails to enhance accessibility and quality of education hence, the common prevalence of the unlawful levying of school fees (Rosser & Joshi, 2013). Further, it is within this context that even though, by law, school fees have been eliminated in public primary schools in Madagascar, in some schools parents are still required to contribute some money at the beginning of each academic year, mostly as a result of the delay in the transfer of state funds (Lesne, 2013). Levying such contributions violates the relevant prescripts governing fee free education however, in the face of empty school coffers at the beginning of the year or term, the principals as accounting officers need to ensure that academic programmes are delivered.

Furthermore, Orodho (2014) observes that exorbitant covert school fees have re-emerged in most free primary and free day secondary schools in Kenya. This is in sharp contrast to Indonesian context where the International Standard Schools are overtly allowed to proceed with the levying of fees (Rosser and Joshi, 2013). This concurs with South African practice where some schools are declared as fee paying schools. Nonetheless, this re-emergence presents sharp contradictions between theory, that which is advocated by free education policies and practice, contingency policies that are developed by schools in the wake of fiscal constraints. These contingency contributions may have serious implications for the poor since they may constrain access to education and fuel the dropout rates. Consequently, principals are caught between the inadequacy of state funds and the diminishing capacity of school fiscus while they have to maintain equilibrium without infringing on the right to education which becomes a challenge.

#### **2.3.3.5 Lack of requisite financial management skills**

In South Africa, for both fee paying and no fee paying schools, state funding allocations are transferred directly into schools' bank accounts (Department of Education, 2006). This adds considerable financial responsibility on school leadership since the principals and the SGBs are in charge of their schools treasury (RSA, 1996a, sec. 16a). Therefore, both fee free and fee paying schools have to contend with substantial amounts of money from state funds or school fees or both. This requires both the principals and the SGBs to understand school finance management in order to optimise benefits from their sound financial decisions within the context of the schools' short and long term progressive planning. In the midst of all these changes it poses a challenge that the principals do not have prior training in the management of the public finances to execute this responsibility (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). It becomes evident that in such a case the principals may not be capacitated to effectively lead the schools' financial management systems which constrains the sustainability of sound financial policies at school level. Therefore, the principals may lack requisite fiscal discipline required to enable them to efficiently execute this task.

This may highlight the reality that, in some cases, training on financial and school management for the principals and school management teams within the context of free primary education is provided on ad hoc basis (Nishimura et al., 2009). In their South African study, Giese, Zide, Koch and Hall (2009) found that, notwithstanding the attempts to train

SGBs, the procurement processes, budgetary issues, control and monitoring of physical infrastructure, management of school finance and presenting finance reports constitute complexities and become arduous for a number of SGBs. This scenario may be aggravated by the aforesaid ad hoc approach to school financial management training and development of both the principals and SGBs. It is my contention that training needs to be provided on progressive basis so that it becomes a process, not an event. If training is perceived to be an event it may lack the requisite capacity to empower the principals with skills to implement and sustain sound financial policies. I further argue that the complex nature of the functions of SGBs may be worsened by the reality that some SGB members are illiterate, particularly in the historically disadvantaged schools. This suggests that there is no rigorous policy advocacy and clearly defined, process approach to training and development programmes regarding school finance management systems. Consequently, the principals may not be well conversant with these systems which may challenge their competencies in the execution of their mandates thereby ultimately hindering their effective implementation.

With the advent of the ANNSSF in South Africa and the per learner state funding allocations the management of school finance has become complex. This is aggravated by the overlapping of the functions of the principals and the SGBs which becomes a potential source of conflict (Mestry, 2013). Therefore, if the responsibilities of both the SGBs and principals are not clarified, the school treasury may collapse thereby in turn collapsing critical school operations. This requires the principals to acquire some basic financial accounting skills and be conversant with the legislative framework which governs the use of public funds, particularly school allocations. In South Africa public funds need to be used within the ambit of the *Public Finance Management Act, 1 of 1999* (PFMA) and SASA (RSA, 1996a; 1999). Compounding the challenges of the lack of financial management skills is the reality that the school allocations should be used within the relevant prescripts and guidelines issued by the PDEs. Research suggests that these prescriptions pose a challenge for the SGBs as well as the principals as they are not sure about the “how” of accessing more funding or re-channelling funding received to areas where shortage is experienced (Mestry, 2014). For instance, funds allocated for electricity and water may be inadequate or a rural school which does not have electricity and water may not be sure about how they can re-channel such funds to other operational costs. Such state of affairs paralyses the capacity of the principals to effectively target the immediate actual needs of the schools. It becomes clear that the SGBs and the principals need working knowledge of the relevant legislation and policy prescripts to

mitigate such realities. It is in this context that the mismanagement of school funds has been reported in some schools (Nishimura et al., 2009). In some cases, I argue, the mismanagement of funds may not be deliberate however, it may be caused by incompetency due to lack of training in basic financial management. Furthermore, such mismanagement may shrink the fiscus of the school and deprive the school community of the potential benefits of the capacity of their fiscal resources. This may culminate in budgetary constraints and ultimately compromise the quality of education that the school may provide.

### **2.3.4 Role of the principal amidst constraints**

It becomes the responsibility of the leadership, particularly the principals, to mitigate the aforesaid realities in fee paying and no fee paying schools. However, it is also the responsibility of the principals that in the midst of leading mitigation of these challenges, they ensure that their schools provide quality education. It may be deduced that some of these realities orbit around the issue of fiscal constraints. In the wake of inadequate state funding, emanating from the governments' weak fiscal muscle or delays in the transfer of funding to schools or a combination of the two, principals resort to asking parents to contribute to the schools' fiscus through payment of school fees (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). This is done in order to generate much needed revenue for the school or to bridge the gap between inadequacy of funds or transfer delays and sustainability of minimum service level.

The considerable surge in school enrolments poses a challenge to the public schooling system's capacity to provide adequate professional teachers. In contending with such a challenge, the principals as accounting officers employ the multi-grading system which puts learners of different grades in one class to be taught by one teacher (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). By so doing, on the one hand, the school may be able to alleviate the challenge of the lack of qualified teachers however; on the other hand, this system may inflate the teacher-pupil ratio and compound the administrative burden that teachers have to contend with. In some instances, the capacity of the schools' physical resources may not be able to accommodate the effective implementation of such a system; for example, classrooms are built to accommodate a limited number of learners. In the face of these impediments, some principals resort to utilising the services of volunteer teachers (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). The availability of the services of these teachers may, in the short term, complement the existing academic staff and alleviate the duty load of some teachers in the school thereby potentially

rendering teaching and learning process effective. However, this may not be a sustainable solution since volunteer teachers may not be incentivised to remain at their current schools should they be offered permanent posts elsewhere. Furthermore, fee free or fee paying, public schools are mandated to deliver quality education. It is in this vein that some principals hire the services of additional teachers utilising the PTA levies or school fees (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). This may only materialise in schools that have the financial capacity enabling them to diversify curricula and reduce learner-teacher ratios. Poor schools may have to contend with shortages thereby impeding quality delivery.

Consequently, in some cases, alleviating the combination of the lack of qualified teachers and the constrained fiscal muscle of the school; principals combine classes in order to reduce subject packages or streams that the school offers (Akech & Simatwa, 2010). Such an option, I argue, may ameliorate the immediate aforesaid challenge however, it may deprive learners of the opportunity to explore and exercise their choice which in the long term may narrow their educational experiences and career path thereby leaving the potential of some learners minimally tapped or untapped.

Principals may have to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to leading their schools in sustaining a sound state of their fiscus. It is in this spirit that in the study conducted by Nyangia and Orodho (2014) in Kenya, the principals devised strategies of saving costs inclusive of outsourcing services, conversion of classes into libraries or dormitories thereby optimising benefits and minimising costs. Some principals introduced “income generating activities” in their schools (Nyangia & Orodho, 2014, p. 84). These activities may involve the hiring out of school facilities like school hall or laboratory and setting up a spaza shop within the school premises for the school community. Such activities assist the school to constantly generate revenue to supplement school fees or inadequate state funding. Given this approach, principals may need to acquire basic entrepreneurial skills in order to lead such revenue generating drives.

### **2.3.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented CLT as the theoretical framework underpinning this study which has highlighted the understanding, origins and characteristics of CLT as well as how the study is framed in CLT. It has also discussed the policy landscape, leadership experiences



and challenges regarding fee paying and fee free schools. The chapter concludes by providing mitigation to leadership challenges in the fee free and fee paying schools.

The next chapter will present the research design and methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **NAVIGATING THIS FLIGHT**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter Two presented the theoretical underpinnings of this study, namely, CLT and a review of related literature regarding fee free and fee paying schools. This chapter presents the research design and methodology. To remind the reader, the research questions that inform the study are as follows:

- What are the principals' leadership experiences in fee and no fee paying schools?
- What are the leadership challenges (if any) that the principals experience in fee and no fee paying schools?
- How do principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools mitigate the leadership challenges they experience?

I commence the Chapter by discussing the research paradigm within which the study is positioned and the research design utilised by the study. The chapter will then address methodological issues. This will involve selection of participants and research sites, data generation methods, piloting the instruments, profiling the research participants, data analysis, ethical considerations and ensuring trustworthiness as well as the limitations of the study.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Paradigms are particular lenses through which realities are viewed and interpreted (Nieuwenhuis, 2013). It becomes the way in which the world is viewed and meaning is made of such a world. A paradigm represents our thoughts about the world which, however, cannot be proven (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These thoughts culminate in a particular lens or world view which enables presentation of coherent realities. This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm views people's truths as subjective hence the existence of multiple truths and therefore, knowledge becomes the product of social construction

(Nieuwenhuis, 2013). This suggests that people's experiences need to be understood and interpreted through their own eyes, which Nieuwenhuis (2013) refers to as "insider's point of view", not those of the researcher (p. 56). Through an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon, meanings that people ascribe to such phenomenon and their setting are understood. This acknowledges the prevalence of a number of realities for a single phenomenon. The leadership realities of the principals in the fee free and fee paying schools are subjective including how their meanings have emerged from such realities. Principals may lead in the same categorisation, for example, fee paying schools, however it does not necessarily translate into their experiences being homogenous hence the existence of multiple realities. In this instance, these multiple truths refer to the subjective narratives of the participant principals in leading fee paying and no fee paying schools. These participants' narratives become the medium through which their realities are explored.

Furthermore, this is a qualitative study since it seeks to describe and understand the leadership experiences of principals in fee and no fee paying schools within their natural context (Nieuwenhuis, 2013). Qualitative research examines systems or people through interaction with and observation of the participants' natural environments and it focuses on participant constructed meanings (Nieuwenhuis, 2013). It seeks to describe and understand a phenomenon within the bounds of its naturalistic environment in order to understand the participants' meanings through the lenses of the participants. It is in this context that de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011, p. 74) emphasises that qualitative research elicits thick narratives of the participants' meanings and experiences in the participants' "own written or spoken words." This study interviewed the participant principals at their schools which was their natural working environments enabling the study to holistically and contextually understand their realities. The study elicited thick narratives of the principals' leadership experiences in fee paying and no fee paying schools. Consequently, both the qualitative approach and the interpretivist paradigm enabled the study to generate data which reflected the diverse worlds of the participant principals.

### **3.3 Research design**

Central to the definitions of the research design is that it is a proposed plan which determines a particular terrain to be followed in conducting research (Creswell, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2013). This becomes a comprehensive, strategic plan which clearly sets out how research

regarding the phenomenon under study will be undertaken. This involves specifics regarding selection of participants, data generation methods and analysis of data. This study employed a case study research design. Case study is used to investigate real life social phenomena in their natural setting (Yin, 2009). To this end, Yin (2009) maintains that rich and detailed narratives are starkly featured in case studies. Further, Nieuwenhuis (2013) concurs with Yin (2009) when he asserts that a case study is characterized by its holistic approach to understanding the manner in which participants interact with their worlds in a particular context and construct meaning of the phenomena being examined. This suggests that this methodology may provide thicker data and deeper understanding of the phenomenon being researched. In this study the case under study is that of the leadership experiences of principals in fee free and no fee paying schools. Accordingly, the researcher explains, describes, illustrates and enlightens through the employment of a case study (Yin, 2009). This is enabled by the rich narratives of the participants' lived worlds. I argue that the bounds between the phenomena and their contexts are indistinct since the case study is context-embedded (Yin, 2009). This suggests that the participant principals' lived worlds may not be detached from their real life contexts if the study is to understand their worlds from within or through their perspectives. Therefore, the meanings derived by the principals regarding their experiences in leading fee paying and no fee paying schools emerged from unique individual contexts, which in this case were the different schools.

Given the above state of affairs, case studies provide a unique example of real individuals in real life contexts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). To sustain this uniqueness of cases, this study has selected real principals in real schools where they are stationed which are either fee paying or fee free. Further, case study is able to ascertain cause and effect (how and why) since it observes the effects of a phenomenon in actual context thereby acknowledging that contexts are powerful determinants of both cause and effect (Cohen et al., 2011). Both claims by Cohen et al. (2011) also justify the choice of a case study for this study because it explored how the principals of the fee free and fee paying schools experienced leading such schools, how meaning was ascribed to those experiences and why, how these school categorisations influenced their experiences and the implications thereof. Furthermore, case study provides a multi-faceted approach to research thereby opening the possibilities of affording a voice to those who neither has voice nor power (Nieuwenhuis, 2013). In this study the participant principals were afforded a platform to tell their stories which in this case were their lived leadership experiences in fee free and fee paying schools.

### **3.4 Selection of participants and research sites**

Sampling is the process of selecting relevant sites and participants for the study (Maree, 2013) which may involve an individual, a group or a setting within which the phenomenon under study is prone to happen (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This suggests that sampling choices are explicitly made with the intention to obtain the thickest sources of data which speaks to the critical questions of the study. Since this is a qualitative study, it utilised non-probability sampling. Consequently, participants for this study were selected through purposive sampling. This type of non-probability sampling, according to Maree (2013) who concurs with de Vos et al. (2011), refers to an explicit selection of a specific event or individuals that are defined by the characteristics of potentially possessing data relevant to the research project. It is further emphasised that this kind of sampling ensures that the selected participants are information rich in issues of paramount importance to the phenomenon under study which, in this case, was the principals' leadership experiences in fee and no fee paying schools (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). Purposively selected information rich participants afforded this study with a critical insight and in-depth understanding of the participants' real life leadership experiences in these school categorisations. Consequently, the participants for this study were four school principals; two of which were from fee free schools and the other two were from fee paying schools located in Umlazi and Pinetown Districts. These two districts were easily accessible to me. These four township school principals had been strategically selected for convenience purposes and because they had been school principals particularly before and after the advent of the aforesaid school categorisations.

### **3.5 Data generation methods**

This study utilised both interviews and document review as methods of generating data.

#### **3.5.1 Interviews**

Featuring prominently in some definitions of interviews is the notion that they are consciously pre-determined and structured conversations (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Kvale, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2013). This suggests that interviews are not everyday conversations occurring spontaneously as these conversations are purposively planned involving the

interviewer who asks questions with the intention of obtaining data relevant to the study and the interviewee who responds to such questions. I arranged and conducted interviews with the purposively selected participant principals. Nieuwenhuis (2013) echoes Cohen et al. (2011) when stating that both participants, the interviewer and the interviewee, engage each other regarding how they interpret the world which is what Kvale (2007) refers to as “construction site for knowledge” (p. 7). The interview platform becomes the venue where reality and meanings are socially constructed which justifies their relevance to this study since the study is premised within the interpretivist paradigm. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to generate data. Both Kvale (2007) and de Vos et al. (2011) postulate that semi-structured interviews, which Cohen et al. (2011) refer to as interview guide approach, enable the study to obtain rich descriptive narratives with participants’ constructed meanings describing the phenomenon being examined. This primary method of data generation is able to elicit deeper understanding of other people’s experiences and the meaning they attach to their reality based on those experiences. By responding to the questions posed by the researcher the participants used their own words to provide their varied, subjective accounts of their lived worlds which in this study were their leadership realities in fee paying and fee free school principals.

It is within the above context that de Vos et al. (2011) state that “stories are a way of knowing” (p. 342). This suggests that fundamentally, narrating one’s experiences constitutes a process of making meaning of one’s day-to-day world. In this study semi-structured interviews granted the participants the platform to tell their lived experiences regarding leading in fee paying and no fee paying schools. Such lived experiences provided the study with in-depth understanding and critical insight of these participants’ leadership realities. The first-hand accounts of the participants further generated rich data which maximised the range of their lived world regarding their leadership experiences in the two aforesaid school categorisations. Furthermore, these participant principals provided divergent perspectives regarding their leadership in these categorisations thereby starkly emphasising the uniqueness of their experiences and contexts. Further, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to detect and explore new emergent lines of inquiry related to the phenomenon under study (de Vos et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2013). These interviews may unearth issues which are otherwise not explicitly covered by the interviewer but which speak directly to the study. For instance, the participant principal may raise issues emanating from the most recent circular regarding the procurement of LTSM in fee free schools. The researcher had the opportunity

to pursue such emergent issues that were relevant to the study. Therefore, this type of interview offered flexibility since the researcher was able to probe and seek clarity thereby maximising and verifying the participants' responses (Nieuwenhuis, 2013; Yin, 2009). This assisted the study to delve deeper into the worlds of the participant principals in order to enhance the production of qualitative data. In this study, their worlds are constituted by their leadership in the categorisations of fee free and fee paying schools. Furthermore, according to Cohen et al. (2011), this type of interview provides a multi-sensory approach to research which embraces speaking, listening and non-verbal gestures. Having these at the researcher's disposal may further enhance the quality of the narratives generated and the synchronised understandings which are enabled by such an approach. However, the limitations of audio recording the interviews are that non-verbal cues cannot be captured by the voice recorder. To circumvent such limitations, I took field notes during the interview process.

Four school principals were interviewed at their schools. These four semi-structured interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. These interviews took approximately one hour to one hour ten minutes. The audio recordings of these interviews were transcribed verbatim for data analysis. This assisted the study in sustaining the accurate capturing of the participants' oral accounts of their realities (Cohen et al., 2011).

As a guide during the interview processes, a semi-structured interview schedule was compiled (see appendix F, page 111). This comprised questions which were premised within the critical questions of this study. Therefore, these questions focused on issues speaking to the principals' leadership experiences in fee free and fee paying schools and how such categorisations influence these experiences, challenges in leading these categorisations and the role of the school leadership, particularly the principals, amidst such challenges.

### **3.5.2 Document review**

Document review focuses on every type of written texts which are considered to speak to the phenomena being researched (de Vos et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2013). This study also examined minutes of staff and SGB meetings since they were reflective of the experiences of the principals commensurate with the categorisation that their schools fell within, which was either fee free or fee paying. The context within which such documents are produced needs to be taken into consideration in order to capture the documents' current meanings and how

understandings of those documents are obtained within their contextual time frames (Cohen et al., 2011). This involves the intentions of the author, the audience and the influence of such documents (Cohen et al., 2011). Minutes of the staff and SGB meetings are the official documents of the school which may be produced on request by the officials of the department. It therefore becomes important to understand the context within which these documents are created. This assisted the study to capture the participants' day to day lived worlds and underlying meanings as well as messages they convey. Furthermore, it also indicated how those messages have influenced or reflect on the leadership experiences of principals in fee free and no fee paying schools. To narrow the focus of the documents to be reviewed, a document review schedule was drawn up. Central to the focus of such a schedule, were three issues emanating from the research questions, namely the principals' leadership experiences in fee free and fee paying schools and how such categorisations influence their experiences, challenges in leading these schools and the role of the school leadership, particularly the principals, amidst such challenges. The school documents that the study reviewed were the minutes of staff and School Governing Body (SGB) meetings since they deepened the understandings of the phenomenon being researched. I focused on the minutes of meetings which took place between June 2013 and June 2015. These provided me with sufficient information related to the phenomenon under study since SASA stipulates that there should be at least one SGB meeting per term (RSA, 1996a, sec. 18). Regarding the frequency of staff meetings, I observed that it varied from school to school since it was dictated by individual school policies and other material conditions prevalent at any given time. It had also been my observation that in some schools their policies stipulated that there must be at least one scheduled staff meeting per term. Therefore, given the above, I ultimately had approximately eight sets of minutes for both staff and SGB respectively.

### **3.6 Piloting the instruments**

The piloting of research instruments has gradually become normal practice in research (de Vos et al., 2011). It is considered to be a trial run, on a smaller scale, of the research instruments which are to be utilised in the main study (Monette, Sullivan & De Jong, 2002). Such a trial run may assist the study in the refining the research instruments since, according to de Vos et al. (2011), piloting should be conducted in the exact same manner as it will be done during the actual study. This process assisted the researcher in eliminating ambiguity, redundancy and identifying exclusions in the questions. Consequently, piloting minimised the



unforeseen challenges that could have emerged during the interview process. Emergence of the unforeseen may constrain the flow of the interview thereby potentially hindering the generation of qualitative data. Prior to the commencement of the actual data generation processes for this study, the research instruments were piloted. The interview schedule was piloted with the principal of the school where I am stationed. During this piloting phase I also recorded the duration of the interview and observed the level of comprehensibility of questions. My observation was that it was not difficult for the participant principal to understand the questions posed though in some cases he would mix the positive and negative leadership experiences in the no fee paying school. Based on this observation, I understood that I had to cautiously and constantly remind the participants to focus their responses on the question at hand. Consequently, I needed to adjust existing probes and create new ones in order to ensure that the participants' responses remained focused and relevant to the study. This enhanced my planning and forecasting for the actual study.

### **3.7 The research participants**

This section presents brief narratives profiling the research participants. To protect the identity of these participants, pseudonyms are used.

#### **Mr Lingisa**

Mr Lingisa is the principal of Green Secondary School in Pinetown District. He has twenty four years experience as a teacher and eleven years as a school principal. He holds a Secondary Teachers' Diploma (STD), Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Honours degrees. This is a fee paying school with current school fees set at two hundred and fifty rand per annum and the total enrolment of one thousand one hundred and eighty three (1183) learners. Green Secondary School is located in a township surrounded by informal settlements. There are forty seven (47) teachers that are all state paid and three non-teaching staff comprising one clerk that is state paid and one cleaner and security guard that are SGB paid. The matric pass rate in 2013 and 2014 was 85, 3% and 56, 7% respectively.

### **Mr Confidence**

Mr Confidence is a principal of White Secondary School in Umlazi District. He has been a teacher for twenty five years with nine years as a deputy principal and six years as a school principal. He has a Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD) and Further Education Diploma (FDE). The current school enrolment is one thousand three hundred and sixty (1360) with 44 teachers who are paid by the state. This is a fee paying school. White Secondary School is situated in a middle income suburb bordered by a low cost housing neighbourhood. The school has eight non-teaching staff, of which six is SGB paid, consisting of two security guards, four cleaners and two administration clerks. The matric class of 2013 and 2014 pass rate was 90% respectively.

### **Mr Doubt**

Mr Doubt is a principal of Grey Secondary school in Pinetown District. He has been a teacher for thirty five years, with three years being a deputy principal and twenty six years as a school principal. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree and University Education Diploma (UED). This is a no fee paying school currently enrolling one thousand three hundred and sixty five learners. Grey Secondary School is also located in a township adjoined by a number of informal settlements. There are forty four teachers state paid teachers and four non-teaching staff consisting of one cleaner and administration clerk who are also paid by the state and two security guards that are paid by the SGB. In 2013 and 2014 the school obtained a pass rate of 56,7% and 67,7% in matric respectively.

### **Ms Reluctant**

Ms Reluctant is a principal of Red Primary School in Umlazi District. She has twenty seven years experience as a teacher, nine years as a deputy principal and seven years as a school principal. She has a Junior Primary Teachers' Diploma (JPTD), Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Education (Honours) (B. Ed (Hons). This no fee paying school's current enrolment is seven hundred and fifty six with sixteen teachers that are state paid and two volunteers. The school employs three non-teaching staff who are SGB paid comprising one administration clerk and two cleaners. Red Primary School is located in a low cost housing area.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is the process of transforming raw data into descriptive narrative which is evidence based (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) for the purpose of unearthing underlying and emerging meanings as well as patterns of relationships (Babbie, 2013). Both these claims are supported by Nieuwenhuis (2013) and Cohen et al. (2011). This process assists the study by ascertaining how the meaning of the phenomena being studied are constructed through examination of the participants' lived worlds so that the findings of the study are emergent from the themes embedded in the data generated. In this study, how the principals ascribed meaning to their leadership experiences in fee free and fee paying schools was analysed and based on such analysis, findings were made.

This study employed qualitative content analysis, a process which involves generating broad categories, themes and patterns regarding the principals' leadership experiences in fee free and fee paying schools (Cohen et al., 2011). This process entails establishing patterns of relationships and correspondence between identified themes and categories (Creswell, 2007; de Vos et al., 2011) and ultimately drawing empirically based conclusions (Yin, 2009) which de Vos et al. (2011) and Cohen et al. (2011) refer to as speculative inferences. Similar units of data were tagged into one category while diverse participants' perspectives were categorised respectively with emergent patterns being identified and analysed. Ultimately, these were synthesised to depict the overall picture of the principals' leadership realities in fee free and fee paying schools. This emphasised that the findings that the study made were within the bounds of the empirical evidence stemming from the responses of the participant principals leading in the aforesaid school categorisations and the school documents analysed, namely the minutes of staff and SBG meetings. Such analysis unearthed multiple participants' realities and perspectives which were similar, contradictory or overlapping and meanings underlying these constructed a meaningful whole or coherent narrative.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

Research ethics deals with conventional principles which guide the researchers' behaviour towards the participants or any other individuals involved in a study. Therefore, ethical principles become canons and a basis against which a researcher should gauge their own behaviour (de Vos et al., 2011). Consequently, relevant ethical protocols were observed. In

this study, I provided the participants with all the relevant information regarding the study so that they participated voluntarily and they understood that withdrawal was allowed at any time (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010) (see informed consent letter, appendix C, pages 107-108). I explained the purpose and rationale of this study to the participants and provided them with details on how it would be conducted so that they were able to grant informed consent (de Vos et al., 2011) (see informed consent letter and declaration by the participant, appendices C and D, pages 107-109). The study also ensured that the participants were not exposed to any physical or psychological harm instead the potential benefits of being involved in this research project were provided. I further informed the participants that their names and the name of the schools where they were stationed, would not be published therefore the study used pseudonyms instead of real names (Cohen et al., 2011) (see informed consent letter, appendix C, pages 107-109). It may be argued that if anonymity is maintained the participants may honestly express themselves which may enhance the quality of their descriptive narratives and the credibility of the study. I applied for permission to conduct research from the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal (see appendix A, page 104). I also secured permission from the principals of the schools identified for the study (see appendix B, pages 105-106). Lastly, I only started conducting research after I received ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (see appendix E, page 110).

### **3.10 Ensuring trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study involves substantiating the argument that the research findings are worth considering (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Accordingly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that there are four issues that need to be attended to in order to enhance trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of data drawn from the participants' original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability is the degree to which the findings of the study can apply or be transferred beyond the bounds of the study. Dependability is an assessment of the quality of the integrated process of data generation, data analysis and theory generation. Confirmability is a measure of how well the study's findings are supported by data generated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

To ensure trustworthiness, these four issues were addressed. To address credibility issues, I gave interview transcripts to the participants to verify if the transcripts represented their original accounts (member checking) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For transferability purposes, transcripts and data analysis documents were kept in a file and were to be made accessible to other researchers on request. Access to the paper trail of this study would provide other researchers with the opportunity to transfer the conclusions of this study to other case studies or to repeat as closely as possible the procedures of this research project. Further, the determination of dependability and confirmability can be done concurrently through a single appropriately executed audit process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, addressing both dependability and confirmability, I enlisted an independent audit of my study involving the data, findings and conclusions which were audited by a critical friend who has a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

### **3.11 Limitations of the study**

Limitations that may affect the research like time constraints, accessibility of participants, and how these issues will be dealt with need to be indicated (Maree, 2013). Further, acknowledging limitations enables the reader to appreciate constraints imposed on the study and to understand the context within which the findings are made (Vithal & Jansen, 2010). This is an in-depth but smaller scale study involving four school principals in a particular context. The findings of the study cannot be generalised to other principals of fee and no fee paying schools other than those that participated in the study. Though the findings cannot be generalised, I am of the view that they will contribute to the body of empirical research regarding the leadership experiences of principals in fee free and fee paying schools.

### **3.12 Chapter summary**

This chapter has outlined how the study was conducted. It has discussed the research paradigm and the research design serving as a blueprint for conducting this study. This is followed by the sampling of participants and the data generation methods. The chapter has also presented a discussion of data analysis and ethical protocols involved in this study. It has further, discussed issues related to trustworthiness and the limitations of the study.

The next chapter focuses on data analysis, discussion and findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ENGAGING WITH THE FLIGHT DATA

#### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three presented an outline of the research design and methodology employed in this study. This chapter presents the findings and a discussion of the findings generated from semi-structured interviews and document reviews. The data was generated from four school principals; two from fee paying and two from no fee paying schools. Further, the study uses pseudonyms for the participant principals and their schools. These participant principals are Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence of Green Secondary School and White Secondary School respectively which are the fee paying schools and Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant of Grey Secondary School and Red Primary School respectively which are the no fee paying schools. To remind the reader, the data sought to address the following research questions:

- What are the principals' leadership experiences in fee and no fee paying schools?
- What are the leadership challenges (if any) that the principals experience in fee and no fee paying schools?
- How do principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools mitigate the leadership challenges they experience?

The generated data is presented according to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interviews. To ensure that the voices of the participants are expressed, I use *verbatim* quotes in the presentation of data. Furthermore, the generated data is discussed in terms of the literature review and the theoretical framework presented in chapter two. I commence by presenting positive and negative leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and positive and negative principals' leadership experiences in no fee paying schools respectively. This is followed by the leadership challenges that principals encounter in these schools. Then, I present attempts by these principals to mitigate leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools.

## **4.2 Leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools**

Emerging from the data generated were two key themes, namely; positive and negative experiences of principals in the fee paying and the no fee paying schools. Therefore, this section commences with the presentation of positive and negative experiences of principals in the fee paying schools followed by the positive and negative experiences of principals in the no fee paying schools.

### **4.2.1 Positive leadership experiences in fee paying schools**

This section presents the following subthemes: fluidity in structuring the school budget, provision of LTSM, offering sports and recreation, maintenance of physical resources and fundraising drives.

#### **4.2.1.1 Fluidity in structuring the school budget**

Both principals, Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence, emphatically echoed each other in stating that the main positive experience of leading a fee paying school was that there was flexibility regarding how their budgets were structured and executed. It also emerged that fee paying schools could use their privately generated revenue to cater for the needs of the school without any restrictions applicable to school allocations. Further, they could also negotiate with service providers regarding the pricing of goods and services. This is what Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence had to say:

*A fee paying school can determine its own budget ... you can purchase whatever you want with your own budget, you can negotiate prices.*

*... you have a leeway to determine the budget of the school and you are responsible for the collection of fees.*

Mr Lingisa added that they were able to hire the services of additional human resources if a need arose. This resonated with the policy provision that while all public schools are prohibited from utilising school allocation for personnel expenditure, on the other hand, the



fee paying schools may use their privately generated income to employ additional academic or support staff (Sayed & Motala, 2012). Mr Lingisa stated that:

*... as fee paying schools we can appoint teachers and pay them, what we call the SGB paid educators [teachers].*

#### **4.2.1.2 Provision of LTSM**

Regarding LTSM, one principal highlighted that parents could also shoulder the responsibility of procuring educational materials for their own children if the fiscus of the school was constrained. On the other hand, the other principal accentuated that they were able to exercise choice regarding who to buy from and minimise delays that were associated with bureaucratic protocols. Being enabled to perform these functions was reflective of the budget flexibilities that the fee paying schools are sanctioned to utilise. Evident from the minutes of the LTSM Committee of Green Secondary School (13 July 2013) was this school's practice of selecting their own service provider from which the LTSM would be procured which resonated with Mr Lingisa's voice. Mr Confidence and M Lingisa said:

*... have a leeway to give parents a stationery list and textbook list should it happen that the monies for such exceed budgetary means of the school.*

*... you are buying from your own supplier ... There is no red tape when you are a fee paying school.*

#### **4.2.1.3 Offering sports and recreation**

Deducing from the participants' voices, both schools, Green Secondary and White Secondary, seemed to be able to afford to offer different sporting codes for their learners with Mr Confidence even announcing that they intended to introduce swimming soon. Mr Lingisa highlighted that they were able to supplement the inadequate amount that was allocated for sports in the school allocation and they were also able to subsidise trips that were related to sports activities. The responses of both principals categorically underlined that their options materialised as a result of the school fees and other school-based fundraisers. Mr Confidence and Mr Lingisa explained:

*... we offer varied sporting activities ... last month we were launching touch rugby.*

*... we are able to top up with the funds ... if we need more sports equipment, if we have more sports trips then we fund those sports trips.*

Mr Confidence's response was also echoed in the minutes of the Finance Committee (Fincom) of White Secondary School (12 June 2015), a sub-committee of the SGB, with regard to the procurement of the sporting kits for different sports activities for the current year. Fincom minutes reported:

*Principal explained [reported] that sports equipment was purchased in March 2015 expenses which included soccer poles, netball kits, volleyball kits etc.*

#### **4.2.1.4 Maintenance of physical resources**

The issue of budget flexibility was highlighted as the enabling factor regarding the upkeep of physical resources. Both participants appeared to suggest that though their funds were limited, they were able to conduct necessary maintenance of their physical infrastructure and resources, with Mr Confidence claiming that his school's library was one of the best in the area. This claim may be made possible by the reality that a fee paying school located in the township may not be able to charge fees or generate revenue compatible to that of their fee paying counterparts in a well-off or middle class residential area (Motala, 2009). For instance, I observed that Green Secondary School is in a township and their school fees is two hundred and fifty rand (R250) while White Secondary School is situated in a middle income area and charges one thousand six hundred rand (R1600); which is comparatively substantially higher. The latter is what Mestry (2014) refers to as the middle school. Middle school may not be in abject poverty however, they may face dearth of steady revenue from school fees. Mr Lingisa clarified:

*To maintain the buildings it is flexible because we can use the allocation that we have collected from parents but that budget is not enough for a big school as ours.*

#### 4.2.1.5 Fundraising drives

It could be deduced from both principals that their fundraising initiatives seemed to yield minimal success. However, their responses suggested that their fundraising drives might not have been structured within a sustainable framework which acknowledged fundraising as another critical funding alternative for their schools. Furthermore, both schools commanded the enrolment of more than one thousand one hundred learners with one principal admitting that in a fee paying school the higher the enrolment, the more financial muscle the school might be able to wield. This resonates with Zuze and Leibbrandt (2011) when they state that in Uganda school enrolment, amongst others, was used to determine the amount of the capitation grant (school allocation in RSA). This reality may persuade the school principals to register more learners even if they would overstretch or had limited infrastructural capacity. This is what Mr Lingisa had to say:

*... the more the enrolment, the more money that comes into the school.*

Central to these principals' positive experiences of leading fee paying schools was the reality that they were exonerated from some of the budgetary protocols that no fee schools should observe. This became possible through private revenue, in the main, that was generated through school fees. It was this private revenue that constituted part of the school budget that could be engineered within an applicable policy framework to respond to the unique specifications regarding the needs of the school. This fluidity empowered the schools to fulfil some of their critical core business operational obligations.

School level budget management is aligned with the rationale for the levying of fees underpinned by the policy imperatives which advocate for control at grassroots and decentralisation of governance (Motala, 2009). This grants fee paying schools some measure of financial autonomy regarding the use of privately generated revenue. This autonomy enables them to utilise such revenue to respond directly to their immediate unique needs. Furthermore, public schools are explicitly encouraged to devise strategies of raising additional funds to supplement government funding through generation of private funds and charging of mandatory school fees (Motala, 2009). It is this type of funding which enhances the fiscal capacity of the school so that it may be able to afford what otherwise is either not catered for in the school allocation or is limited by inadequacy of state funds. It is in this

context that Motala (2009) emphasises that the existing gaps between government funding and what is perceived to be adequacy benchmark in the provision of quality education is bridged through fees and other privately generated income. This suggests that these contributions have a critical role to play in the quest for the school to deliver quality education. It is in this vein that Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) from which this study draws, acknowledges that 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations (schools) are knowledge-based and therefore, complex (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). Given the reality of the current funding model of the public schooling system and the role that stakeholders need to play in ensuring school effectiveness, complexities are inevitable. Leading such complexities in schools, arising from policy realities and the intricate interactions of different stakeholders, constitutes complexity leadership for the principals.

#### **4.2.2 Negative leadership experiences in fee paying schools**

Following, are the subthemes presented under this theme: culture of non-payment of school fees, insufficiency of LTSM, budgetary constraints, extracurricular programmes, fundraising campaigns and nutrition programme in a fee paying school.

##### **4.2.2.1 Culture of non-payment of school fees**

Emerging prominently from the responses of both participants was the reality of the culture of non-payment of school fees. This culture involved even those parents who were perceived to be able to afford to pay school fees. Consequently, this scenario constrained the schools' fiscus. The adverse reality of the non-payment of school fees was aggravated by the granting of fee exemptions as per policy prescripts. Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence reported that the current annual collection rate of school fees from parents was less than fifty percent and sixty percent respectively. They stated that such a scenario constrained their purchasing powers with one participant adding that they could not even enlist the services of additional teachers. Mr Confidence drew my attention to the fact that though, by law, they were allowed to institute litigation against parents who did not pay school fees; they did not have the financial capacity since it was a costly exercise. This is what Mr Lingisa had to say:

*... sometimes parents do not pay. ... we cannot purchase whatever the school needs ...  
There are many exemptions related to parents that cannot pay.*

Drawing from the minutes of the Finance Committee (Fincom) of White Secondary School (17 September 2013), it was confirmed that the school was faced with a challenge regarding the non-payment of school fees and the resultant state of the school's finances which was reflective of expenditure that exceeded the income. In addition, Mr Confidence of White Secondary reported that it was difficult to convince parents to comply regarding their school fees obligations.

#### **4.2.2.2 Insufficiency of LTSM**

The adverse impact of the school fees collection rate which was considerably less than the maximum seemed to filter through to different facets of school life. While one participant pointed out that funds were not always adequate to procure sufficient LTSM to cater for all learners, the other participant mentioned that the retrieval of LTSM was a challenge made worse by the failure of learners to take good care of their textbooks which ultimately compelled the school to pay more. This is what Mr Lingisa said:

*... you can't buy or purchase enough LTSM for learners ... budget is not enough for a school as big as ours.*

Furthermore, appearing to resonate with the voice of Mr Confidence of White Secondary School with regard to the negative experiences associated with the maintenance and retrieval of textbooks, was the minutes of the staff meeting of Green Secondary School (10 June 2013) which revealed that teachers should report to the principal about the current condition of textbooks issued to learners and losses (if any) quarterly.

#### **4.2.2.3 Budgetary constraints**

Inferring from both participants' responses, it became clear that the quest to have well maintained infrastructure and adequate infrastructural capacity was also constrained by the budget. Exacerbating this scenario, Mr Confidence exposed that a substantial portion of the school budget was consumed by the maintenance of vandalised plumbing and ablution facilities. He added that on registration some parents misrepresented facts regarding their socioeconomic backgrounds in order to evade financial obligations towards the school. Such state of affairs ultimately shrank the school coffers. Mr Lingisa announced that his school

was formerly a no fee paying school but it was changed to a fee paying status therefore, some parents were still reluctant to pay the school fees as they were perceived to doubt that it had actually changed which compounded their budgetary constraints. These budgetary constraints of the fee paying schools may be exacerbated by the reality that they receive state funding which is less than the adequacy benchmark (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009). This means that these schools do not receive minimally adequate financial resources to be utilised to realise the right to quality education which compels them to generate funds that may at least place them on par with or possibly above the adequacy benchmark. Further, Fincom minutes of White Secondary School (16 November 2013) revealed that due to the inadequacy of revenue that the school raised, the school was gradually failing to sustain academic and support staff that were paid from the school coffers hence the SGB resolution that the SGB paid staff be reduced. Mr Confidence and Mr Lingisa elucidated:

*... still have parents who find ways and means [misrepresent facts] so that they do not pay.*

*There are challenges of collection.*

#### **4.2.2.4 Extracurricular programmes**

With regard to leading sport and recreation, Mr Confidence elucidated that with the current administrative loads and prescribed working hours that teachers contended with, it was difficult to have teachers totally committed to sports after the lapse of the prescribed seven hours. Such state of affairs demanded that the school utilised its fiscal muscle to employ additional sports management staff which his school could not afford unlike its other fee paying counterparts. Mr Lingisa raised the issue of non-payment of school fees as, sometimes, a constraint towards successfully leading the school's extracurricular activities. He further appeared to suggest that their learners might miss participation in the current (2015) sports season due to dearth of funds. Mr Confidence said:

*... educators are now chasing paperwork.*

#### 4.2.2.5 Fundraising campaigns

Furthermore, the participants echoed the same sentiments regarding the minimal success of their fundraising campaigns. They attributed such state of affairs to the reality that they were inclined to expect the very same parent community that could not either afford or did not pay school fees to support their school-based fundraising initiatives. However, they also cited different reasons for such limited success, with one participant admitting that they were not good at fundraising and the other pointing out that one needed to have connections to be able to solicit funding in the corporate world. Mr Confidence had this to say:

*... we can get minimal amounts. ... you need to be connected for you to be funded by the big companies (Mr Confidence).*

Attempts to fundraise at school level were also evident in the Fincom minutes of White Secondary School (12 Jun 2013) since the school tuckshop was also used as a fundraiser through its outsourcing.

#### 4.2.2.6 Nutrition programme in a fee paying school

Contrary to the policy provisions of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) that no fee paying schools which are in quintiles 1, 2 and 3 qualify as feeding schools (Department of Education, 2009), Mr Lingisa revealed that they were also on the programme though they were a fee paying school however, they fed learners from Monday to Thursday. He pointed out that there were delays of up to three months regarding the payment of the suppliers which, in some cases, ultimately led to the suppliers being unable to fulfil their contractual obligations; which were to supply food. Mr Lingisa added that it caused chaos in a secondary school as his learners were young adults and teachers could not monitor them during their feeding times. This sharply highlights the inconsistencies and flawed criteria in the ranking of schools according to quintiles by the Department of Education (Mestry, 2014) since Green Secondary School was previously a quintile 3 which was subsequently changed to quintile 4 without, according to Mr Lingisa, having to apply for such a change. This is what Mr Lingisa had to say:

*I did not apply for a change. There were complaints from other schools in this street.*

What takes centre stage in these principals' negative experiences is the failure of parents to fulfil their obligations regarding the payment of school fees. Such state of affairs has implications for the effective functioning of the school and ultimately, the quality of education that the school is able to offer since it affects all spheres of school life. Fee paying schools receive lesser state funding than their no fee paying counterparts (Sayed & Motala, 2012). Therefore, in the context of limited state funding, public schools are incentivised to solicit as much private funding as they could in order to complement government resources (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009). It becomes very important for the fee paying schools to ensure that school fees are paid timeously as they are perceived to be their main lifeline while in the process of waiting for other fundraising initiatives to materialise. The ability or inability of parents to pay school fees may determine whether the school has the financial muscle, for example, to employ additional teachers. For schools that are serving richer communities, private funding is relatively higher than that of the schools that serve poorer communities (Motala, 2009). This suggests that the school fees levied may be reflective of the socioeconomic status of the community it services and such a status may also determine how much the school is able to generate from fundraising drives. Given the above, the granting of fee exemptions may also be regarded as loss of revenue which may influence some fee paying schools to withhold such information from deserving parents (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009). It is in the context of the above discussion that CLT recognises that, paradigmatically, leadership thinking needs to shift from one that focuses on individuals' (principals') actions to one that views organisations (schools) as complex adaptive systems (CAS) (stakeholder collective) which constantly generate knowledge and innovative solutions (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Therefore, principals alone may not be able to successfully mitigate through their negative leadership experiences; they need to coordinate the actions of all stakeholders which may enhance the creative and adaptive capacity of their schools. It is not the individual actions of the principals but it is their enabling leadership they need to provide to the constant interactive engagements of the diverse stakeholder collective in the leadership and governance of their schools that becomes a complex phenomenon.



### **4.2.3 Positive experiences of leading no fee paying schools**

Management of the schools finances, learner nutrition, escalations in school enrolments, fundraising initiatives and procurement of LTSM are the subthemes that emerged from this theme.

#### **4.2.3.1 Management of school finances**

Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant highlighted that being the no fee paying schools, they did not have to contend with the non-payment of school fees and they found it easier to manage the finances of their schools since their only main source of income was the school allocation from the Department of Basic Education. This claim, however, is refuted by the findings of the study conducted by Mestry (2014) which reported that school financial management posed a challenge for some principals which was exacerbated by the reality that they lacked the basic financial accounting skills. One participant added that no fee paying school's financial management was made easier by the fact that they were provided with a framework within which the school budget needed to be drawn up. Ms Reluctant had this to say:

*Not chasing after parents who do not want to pay ... Balancing the books is so easy.*

#### **4.2.3.2 Learner nutrition**

They further concurred with each other regarding the advantage of having state funded learner nutrition. It emerged that since their schools served poor communities their learners immensely benefitted from this nutrition programme as it was perceived to sustain regular attendance for some learners thereby reducing the number of learners who might attend classes on empty stomachs. Mr Doubt stated:

*Learner nutrition ... really keeps this school intact in terms of learner attendance ...*

Minutes of the staff meeting of Grey Secondary School (22 September 2014) confirmed that their school provided food for learners which was a state-subsidised programme and that the school needed to submit learner details as well as registers confirming the number of learners

fed daily. This is within the ambit of the NSNP policy provisions that the no fee paying schools qualified as feeding schools (Department of Education, 2009).

#### **4.2.3.3 Escalations in school enrolments**

Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant also shared similar sentiments with regard to school enrolments. Both principals highlighted that their schools had to contend with high rates of enrolment influenced by their schools being no fee paying and the realities of the poor communities in which the schools were located. Mr Doubt was also of the view that his school being a feeding school contributed to their current enrolment upsurges. Mr Doubt declared:

*We have got high enrolment rate ... Learners from informal settlements flock to this school ... it is a no fee paying and it is also a feeding school.*

Mr Doubt added that his, was the only secondary school and no fee paying school in the area and they had four feeder schools. This suggested that his school was bound to experience upsurges in learner population. This resonates with the finding that free education resulted in the increased demand for secondary education which was higher in urbanised areas in Kenya (Orodho, 2014). This suggested that a number of learners were able to complete primary education and proceed to secondary education.

#### **4.2.3.4 Fundraising initiatives**

Regarding fundraising, they both echoed similar experiences that their fundraising initiatives yielded minimum returns. However, they cited different reasons for such a scenario. On the one hand, Mr Doubt pointed out that businesses were not always keen to fund a no fee paying school as they perceived it to be adequately funded by the state. On the other hand, Ms Reluctant maintained that their campaigns were not that successful since the school was situated in a low cost housing area where most parents were unemployed and lived on social grants. Such perceptions and setbacks were perceived to deprive these schools of the potential benefits of this critical funding alternative. This is what Mr Doubt had to say:

*The school would not have enough donations, in fact very meagre finances would be raised by the school.*

It is also evident from the minutes of staff meeting of Grey Secondary School (6 September 2013 & 27 June 2014) that the school appeared to explore different fundraising initiatives which included allowing a company to post a billboard at the school for a fee, approaching local businesses for donations and a school car wash.

#### **4.2.3.5 Procurement of LTSM**

Furthermore, these two principals concurred with each other when pointing out that the provision of LTSM was just average since their procurement was restricted to the prescribed percentages apportioned for LTSM in the school allocation. Ms Reluctant revealed that her school was section 21 without function (c) which meant that their LTSM allocation was withheld by the Department of Basic Education in the form of a “voucher” and they had to place LTSM orders through the Department (RSA, 1996a, sec. 21). This function (c), which may be granted by the Head of Department, involves the purchasing of textbooks, educational materials or school equipment (RSA, 1996a, sec. 21). She also mentioned that gradually in the past three to four years, they had been receiving their LTSM in time which allowed them to plan distribution of textbooks in advance. Mr Doubt clarified that it was the stationery supply that was adequate for all learners. Ms Reluctant and Mr Doubt explained:

*... but the LTSM funds are kept by the Department for us to do orders.*

*... LTSMs I would say it was mediocre because the funding would always be confined to the amount allocated for LTSM.*

Emerging from the data was the reality that no fee paying schools did not have to contend with the culture of non-payment of school fees since they were mainly funded from the state coffers; instead they had to deal with overpopulated schools. The categorisation of the schools as the no fee paying schools was perceived as the pulling factor for enrolment hence the considerably high enrolment rates. This factor could have been compounded by the fact that learners were provided with state-subsidised meals which were seen to be critical in maintaining learners’ attendance and concentration given the socioeconomic realities of the surrounding communities. It further became clear that the departmental prescriptions regarding the percentages guiding the expenditure on the items covered by the school allocation restrained the desired fluidity of the school budget. Such restraint potentially

thwarted the attempts of the school to address its individual, immediate challenges. This echoes the findings that the abolition of school fees in some schools led to the remarkable surge in enrolments (Nyangia & Orodho, 2014; Lesne, 2013; Nishimura et al., 2009). Such surges may suggest that access to the public schooling system was enhanced, especially for the poorest learners.

The understandings of the participants regarding the use of the school allocation was within the scope of the requirement that schools should spend their allocations according to the policy prescripts which, in the case of South Africa, are published by the Department of Basic Education (Nishimura et al., 2009). Therefore, schools may not necessarily be able to utilise their allocations to address their day to day operational needs which may ultimately reduce their competitive edge. According to CLT, leadership is context-embedded. Consequently, as a contextual theory of leadership, CLT views positive or negative experiences of principals in either fee paying or no fee paying schools as contextual realities of their leadership in these school categorisations (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This suggests that their leadership exists in, and is perceived in and from the context of the categorisations their schools fall within. Their leadership experiences may not be explained beyond the bounds of fee paying or no fee paying policies.

#### **4.2.4 Negative experiences of leading no fee paying schools**

These negative experiences are presented under the following subthemes: overpopulated schools, schools infrastructure, human resources, limited LTSM capacity and nutrition issues.

##### **4.2.4.1 Overpopulated schools**

Ms Reluctant and Mr Doubt contended with similar realities regarding high enrolment rates resulting to overcrowded classrooms. Such realities rendered it difficult for the teachers to inject and generate maximal inputs into and outputs respectively from the teaching and learning process. This would, *inter alia*, deprive learners of individualised attention and compromise management plans regarding teachers' submissions. Mr Doubt even added that such overpopulated classrooms tended to give rise to disciplinary issues like brawls, theft and truancy. These realities were aggravated by either the lack of or the dilapidated infrastructural capacity of the school. Mr Doubt said:

*There is less individual attention ... Teachers always complain about overcrowding ... especially when it comes to meeting deadlines for submission ...*

#### **4.2.4.2 Schools infrastructure**

Both principals stated that their physical infrastructure could not comfortably house all their learners, with one participant mentioning that currently they accommodated 756 learners in 11 pre-fabricated classrooms. Mr Doubt explained that they were even compelled to stagger examination sessions so that different grades would write at different times due to lack of floor space. This is what Ms Reluctant said:

*I have two teachers teaching 152 learners ... there are 82 learners in grade 5, in one classroom.*

It appeared a common phenomenon amongst the two principals of no fee paying schools that their physical infrastructure was not adequate and some classrooms were in a dilapidated state, with some even leaking, and they needed to be repaired and renovated as soon as possible. Ms Reluctant drew my attention to the fact that they did not have flushing ablution facilities and she used a shipping container as a principal's office. Mr Doubt stated:

*The infrastructure in fact is not good and not sufficient. ... 14 classrooms ... the whole wing of the old classrooms requires immediate repairs.*

#### **4.2.4.3 Human resources**

Both principals emphasised that negative experiences that emanated from high enrolment filtered down to staffing matters. Consequently, they had to contend with the reality that they did not either have adequate teaching or support personnel. This substantially increased the teacher to learner ratio in the classroom; with one participant revealing that on average they had approximately 65 to 68 learners in a classroom and that all her support staff was not state-paid. They further lamented the reality that schools no longer had the recruitment and selection powers. Such powers fell beyond their jurisdiction as they were then vested with the districts of the Department of Basic Education. Therefore, they perceived the Department to

find it difficult to allocate them teachers that would fit the exact specific needs of their schools. Ms Reluctant stated:

*The enrolment is high, staffing is low. ... as a school we don't employ teachers. Teachers are given to us by the Department of Education (Ms Reluctant).*

#### **4.2.4.4 Limited LTSM capacity**

Further, it emerged that the issue of enrolment also negatively impacted on the provision of LTSM. Limited funds allocated for LTSM, exacerbated by the ring-fencing of such allocation, in the school allocation constrained the quest to ensure fair accessibility to LTSM for all learners. This was aggravated by the overpopulation of their schools which ultimately compelled Mr Doubt's school to ask learners to share textbooks; a scenario which was made worse by learners who failed to keep their textbooks in good condition. Further, Mr Doubt stated that textbooks for Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) were considerably pricey consequently; it was unaffordable for his school to secure a copy for each learner. Such a scenario could have a detrimental impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Mr Doubt's experiences are echoed in the findings of a Kenyan study which highlighted that after the advent of fee free primary education, the textbook to learner ratio decreased to 1:3 compared to 1:15 before this educational dispensation (Nishimura et al., 2009). Ms Reluctant added that they were forced to place orders which were less than the actual required items and top up with the balance the following year. She revealed that since they were section 21 school without function (c) they were required to buy through the department, as it held their funds for LTSM, and had to utilise its designated service providers with substantially marked up prices. Mr Doubt had this to say:

*... there was not enough budget for LTSMs ... not every learner would be able to get individual learner material... there would always be backlogs annually ...*

Resonating with the voices of Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant was the report from the minutes of the staff and the SGB meetings of Grey Secondary School (23 January 2014), respectively, regarding the availability of and inadequacy of funding for LTSM. These SGB minutes reported:

*Books were pruned [textbook orders reduced] because there is [was] no money in the school.*

#### **4.2.4.5 Nutrition issues**

Mr Doubt elucidated that though, in the main, learner nutrition programme sustained a number of learners. There were negatives that emanated from the food related conflicts amongst the people employed to prepare food for the learners. This involved theft of some of the food items by kitchen staff and break-ins by the community which targeted this food for the learner nutrition. Mr Doubt had this to say:

*... quarrels among food handlers ... stealing of some feeding stuff by food handlers ... outside community ... tendency to break in and steal some of the material.*

These food related negative experiences might distinctly mirror the socioeconomic status, unemployment and poverty levels of the community within which the school was located. Minutes of the SGB meeting (3 February 2014) were also reflective of Mr Doubt's report that the kitchen staff was unlawfully benefitting from the food which was meant for learners which led to the shortages of some food items. This is what the minutes of the SGB revealed:

*The principal reported to them [SGB] that the food handlers are [were] taking food [stealing] to their homes.*

Though the increases in enrolment rates suggested that accessibility to educational opportunities was improved, it had negative implications for the effective and quality teaching and learning process. Given the overpopulated classes, it became difficult for the teachers to attend to the learners' unique individual challenges which deprived learners of potentially tailor-made interventions to their problems. With the budgetary constraints flowing from the limited state funding and the bare minimum generated from fundraising, these no fee paying schools lacked the financial muscle to maintain and increase their infrastructural capacity, hiring of additional academic or support personnel and the procurement of adequate LTSM. The reality of the schools' fiscal constraints are echoed in Lesne (2013) when he states that the school's fiscus is inclined to decline if the lost revenue generated from school fees is not compensated by increasing state funding. It sharpens the

contradictions to note that in some cases schools collected more funds through school fees than what they received from the state. The reality of limited public funding was further compounded by the stringent guidelines regarding how it should be disbursed.

Further, the data is in line with the findings by Akech & Simatwa (2010) which posit that overcrowded classes constrained the effectiveness of the teacher thereby ultimately hindering effective teaching and learning processes. This may hinder the possibility of teachers' individualised interventions; a scenario which may handicap learners' performance. Participants concurred with Vavrus & Moshi (2009) when they argue that high schooling costs can prevent the poorest parents from sending their children to school. Consequently, the removal of mandatory school fees may decrease educational costs thereby enhancing access for a number of learners. This potentially eliminates exclusion brought about by the charging of school fees. These principals' leadership experiences confirm that CLT transcends the bounds of bureaucracy as it focuses on the actions born out of the network of collaborative stakeholder interactions which are shifting and changing with time (Coveney, 2003). Consequently, schools should adapt their level of complexity so that it is commensurate with the level of complexity prevalent in the environment in which they operate. This is manifested in the attempts of the school community collective to create strategies to cope with lack of funds and the inadequacy of LTSM like, for example, embarking on fundraising drives and buying in smaller quantities annually until it becomes sufficient.

### **4.3 Principals' leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools**

This theme is presented in two broad themes, namely; leadership challenges in the fee paying schools and leadership challenges in the no fee paying schools respectively.

#### **4.3.1 Fee paying schools: Principals' leadership challenges**

Following, are the sub-themes that emerged from the data generated: compensation for fee exemptions, provision of quality of education, school fees and delays in school allocation transfers, resources and infrastructural capacity of schools and inadequate fiscal resources.



#### 4.3.1.1 Compensation for fee exemptions

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence distinctly pointed out that the processes for compensation claims for fee exemptions granted were perceived to be a challenge. They pointed out to the protracted delays in the payment of compensation by the Department of Education which dragged for up to a year as they submitted documentation by June of the current year and they received compensation at almost the same time the following academic school year. They added that such delays constrained the capacity of the schools to provide both teachers and learners with the requisite resources timeously which in turn compromised the mandate of the schools to deliver quality public education. This scenario subsequently had adverse implications for both the teachers' and learners' performances which ultimately defeats the ends of the policy intentions of compensation for fee exemptions. Mr Confidence also revealed that even if one contested the delays one was afforded a hearing after twenty four months which rendered the processes futile hence his perception that fee exemptions was money one could not recover. This is what Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence had to say:

*We submit by 30 June for the previous year and we will be paid by 30 June the following year.*

*... that will also compromise the quality of teaching and learning.*

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence further concurred with each other when they reported that they did not know the formula that the Department of Education employed in the process of determining the final amount of compensation for fee exemptions granted in each school. This resonates with the finding that schools are compensated based on the formula determined by the Department of Education (Mestry, 2014) which does not necessarily guarantee full compensation on the amount claimed. According to Mr Confidence, the formula used was perceived to be failing to respond to the needs of the school. They unanimously echoed each other in highlighting that their schools did not receive the actual amount claimed for the sum total of all the exemptions approved by the school commensurate with the applicable school fees for the year in question. They received amounts which were considerably less than what they calculated to be due to them. Mr Confidence emphasised that such a scenario (less compensation) exacerbated the level of pressure the schools might already be contending with since they needed to ensure that the difference between the actual

claim and the actual amount ultimately paid was recouped through other private funding sources. Mr Confidence had this to say:

*You don't get what you claim for. And the formula we really don't get the formula they are using.*

#### **4.3.1.2 Provision of quality public education**

It emerged that Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence were of the view that the issue of quality education was still a challenge. They revealed that their schools did not as yet offer the quality of education they perceived to be mandated to deliver however; they cited different reasons for such a critical constraint. Mr Lingisa pointed out that it was fair quality in the context of resource realities they practically dealt with. Given this context, Mestry (2014) asserts that adequacy of school allocations acquires the schools the critical resource capacity enabling them to deliver quality education. Consequently, the current state of their quality was reflective of the operational and contextual realities their schools had to deal with. Mr Lingisa, on the one hand, emphatically highlighted the issues related to funding including, *inter alia*, the culture of non-payment of school fees and the constant failure of the Department of Education to pay school allocations timeously. It is within this context that paying school fees, it is argued, is linked to quality education (Motala, 2009). Mr Lingisa had this to say:

*... I cannot stand and say I offer quality education but it's fair education to the African child.*

In addition, Mr Lingisa insistently highlighted the chronic state of absenteeism amongst both learners and teachers. Such a scenario was perceived to contribute to poor results hence his conviction that elimination of this chronic absenteeism was a prerequisite to turning the school around in terms of outputs. This suggested that Mr Lingisa clearly understood that the prevalence of such chronic absenteeism interfered with the performance targets of the school thereby adversely tampering with the level of quality the school offered. This is what Mr Lingisa said:

*The challenge is absenteeism. That is the biggest challenge.*

On the other hand, Mr Confidence appeared to suggest that the lack of commitment from stakeholders, particularly, parents and learners and the lack of departmental support compromised the school's attempts to provide quality it intended to offer. The SGB minutes of White Secondary School (21 February 2014) revealed that the school faced disciplinary challenges as some learners attempted to assault the principal in his office to force him to release their cell phone that was confiscated. This ill-discipline of some learners might have been the manifestation of the lack of commitment which ultimately, could have reflected on the school's quality in terms of generating maximal inputs and outputs.

#### **4.3.1.3 School fees and delays in school allocation transfers**

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence concurred with each other in accentuating the constant failure of the Department of Basic Education to deposit their school allocations into their bank accounts in good time. Both participants revealed that it was June (when the interviews were conducted) but they had not as yet received their long overdue allocations for the current year 2015 which should have been paid in April. These participants' experiences are echoed in the studies conducted in South Africa, Uganda, Malawi, Ghana and Kenya which found that the delay in the transfer of school allocations culminated in delays in service delivery which compromised delivery of quality education (Nishimura et al., 2009; Sayed & Motala, 2012). Mr Confidence even drew my attention to the new policy provision that they should buy their educational materials before the beginning of the year which he considered unrealistic since he could not pre-empt the total number of new admissions and learner transfers. Such a provision compromised the school's projections since purchases for the current year might be rendered insufficient should the school accept new admissions which might be inevitable. This is what Mr Confidence said:

*... for instance, this year schools ought to have been paid during the month of April. We have not yet been paid.*

The unison of the voices of both participants when they emphasised the adverse reality of the school allocation transfer delays on the varied faculties of school life was clear. This was aggravated by the dwindling of school fee payments during mid-year. Mr Confidence categorically stated that this delay compromised the leadership and management of physical,

financial and human resources as well as professional and institutional development which ultimately hindered operationalisation of the school development plan. Furthermore, Mr Lingisa explained that the delays adversely impacted on academic and extra-curricular activities as he perceived the school allocation to be their main source of revenue. Consequently, it was the school fees that complemented the public funding, not vice-versa. He cited that it was the school sports season but they were unable to subsidise their learners in various sporting codes. He added that the mid-year examinations were imminent while they could not afford to buy the necessary stationery. Mr Lingisa had this to say:

*It impacts on many things if there is a delay of transfer of funds from the Department of Education.*

Mr Lingisa appeared to suggest that their reality, regarding transfer delays, was compounded by the considerable number of orphans, which a township school contended with, who were eligible for full exemption.

#### **4.3.1.4 Resources and infrastructural capacity of schools**

Concurring with each other, Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence highlighted that their resources were not adequate. However, in some cases, the inadequacy they dealt with was not similar and it was in different facets of their school lives. They pointed out that their personnel was inadequate though they did not have additional teachers; with Mr Lingisa emphasising that his academic personnel was sufficient but it was the support staff that was not sufficient considering the size of the school. He revealed that the school only had one administrative clerk and one cleaner who were paid by the state. Both Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence lamented the reality that their schools did not have adequate floor space; their classrooms were not commensurate with their current enrolments. Mr Confidence had this to say:

*Resources are not sufficient.*

Mr Confidence pointed out that his school did not have adequate sports infrastructure which was aggravated by the reality that the school did not have sufficient land on which sport and recreation infrastructure could be developed. Consequently, lack of land was a barrier towards diversifying the range of sporting codes the school intended to offer to learners.

Given this state of affairs, Motala (2009) observes that it has not been easy for the state to redress the historic backlog in infrastructural development of schools and the increase in educational expenditure has been constrained by inflation and administrative inefficiencies. Mr Confidence had this to say:

*The perimeter of the school [school land] is not enough.*

Mr Confidence added that his school had forty four teachers and eight support staff which rendered the discharging of his leadership duties a formidable task. He believed that the malfunctioning of a system could be attributed to or resultant to an element of human inefficiency therefore, teachers needed to be professionally developed and led within the scope of the relevant policy framework. Mr Confidence had this to say:

*Managing the staff on its own is a serious challenge ...*

#### **4.3.1.5 Inadequate fiscal resources**

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence unanimously accentuated that the state funding per learner allocations was not adequate in relation to a myriad of financial obligations and mandates they had to fulfil. This is in line with the report that adequate funding of education in emerging economies is constrained by lack of fiscal capacity (Motala, 2009). Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence also appeared to suggest that the ring-fencing of public funds and the culture of non-payment of school fees respectively, compounded the realities of the inadequacy of funding. Mr Confidence further drew my attention to the reality that they did not know the formula the Department of Education was utilising to determine funding per learner allocation for a fee paying school therefore, their calculations did not reconcile with those of the government. This is what Mr Confidence said:

*They are not adequate. They will never be adequate.*

Mr Lingisa added that given the above, the school was provided with funds which were less than what they were entitled to in all the prescribed categories of the school allocation. This was compounded when they owed domestic accounts (water, electricity, telephone or

internet) since the Department of Education deducted the due amount and transferred the difference to the school's account. Mr Lingisa had this to say:

*... they (Department of Education) are transferring less of what we are supposed to get in each and every category.*

Drawing from the responses of the two participant principals, it became clear that they contended with a range of varied leadership realities, from administrative, bureaucratic formalities to financial realities. These realities revolved around the adequacy or inadequacy of financial resources, involving either state funds or privately generated revenue. Funding challenges filtered through to different faculties of school business, teaching and learning. These constraints were perceived to compromise the primary mandate of the school which is to deliver quality public education since the schools lacked the fiscal capacity to secure adequate resources and regularly maintain and develop the existing infrastructure. Such a scenario was compounded by the protracted processes characterising state bureaucracy regarding payment of compensation claims and funds transfer.

#### **4.3.2 No fee paying schools: Principals' leadership challenges**

This theme is presented under the following sub-themes emerging from the participants' responses: inadequacy of funding, resources and infrastructure, state of the quality of education, and public funding delays.

##### **4.3.2.1 Inadequacy of funding**

Starkly highlighted by the experiences of Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant from no fee paying schools, was the reality that state funds were not sufficient to respond to the unique realities of their schools. It is in this context that Omwami and Keller (2010) maintain that the capacity of the economies of sub-Saharan African countries to provide fee free education is limited. According to Mr Doubt, this scenario was exacerbated by the policy provision that that ring-fenced specified percentages of the school allocation for specific operational expenditure which removed the element of flexibility in the budget. Such prescriptions constrained the ability of the school to respond directly to their day-to-day operational needs. It is within this context that Nordstrum (2012) posits that fee free education partly rescinds

the financial autonomy these schools previously enjoyed. Ms Reluctant even revealed that she had to use her own financial resources, sink into debts and ultimately “rob Peter to pay Paul” in order to keep the school afloat. Ms Reluctant understood that despite these realities, as a leader, she had to ensure that the school continued with its core business, teaching and learning. This is confirmed by the finding that in Kenya, some principals had to borrow money which they later had to pay with interest (Akech & Simatwa, 2010) in order to ensure that school business did not grind to a halt. This is what Mr Doubt said:

*Not enough. ... it's got its own specifications on what it has to be used on and those specifications would not meet the requirements of the school ...*

Confirming the similar sentiments they shared with Mr Doubt, Ms Reluctant added that the school could not afford to offer salary increment to the SGB paid staff due to fiscal constraints which might compel the school to contend with demotivated staff.

#### **4.3.2.2 Resources and infrastructure**

Echoing similar sentiments, both participants pointed out that their human resources were inadequate, with Mr Doubt emphasising that language teachers had always been insufficient. They attributed this reality to their schools' lack of fiscal muscle; with Ms Reluctant accentuating that having adequate fiscal capacity would allow them to create additional SGB vacancies including hiring the services of more security personnel. They both maintained that their existing physical infrastructure needed some maintenance and further developments and extensions. Minutes of SGB of Grey Secondary School (21 June 2015) reported that they did not have sufficient land for sport and recreation infrastructural development. She had this to say:

*... I would have more staff if I had more finances (Ms Reluctant).*

Ms Reluctant further added that given their current fiscal realities, the issue of the maintenance of physical infrastructure was relegated to the background so that the day-to-day operational needs might be prioritised. Ms Reluctant said:

*... when you don't have enough money, you cannot repair a broken window pane instead of buying photocopying paper.*

It is in this vein that Sayed and Motala (2012) postulate that the minimal resourcing levels in disadvantaged schools is inadequate to bring them on par with their advantaged counterparts in public schooling.

#### **4.3.2.3 State of the quality of education**

Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant admitted that the quality of education that their schools managed to offer was not consistent with the levels of quality they should be providing. Ms Reluctant seemed to consider it an unfair challenge that given the realities they contended with as a fee paying school, they were still expected to produce good results by the Department of Education. Mr Doubt declared that the overall level of quality was not on par with the required levels. Further, Ms Reluctant cited understaffing, overworked personnel, overpopulated classrooms and inadequate LTSM as some of the contributory factors to the quality of education they currently provided. This resonates with the assertion that fee free education may enhance access to education however, it also constrains the infrastructural capacity of the school (Omwami & Keller, 2010) resultant to relative decline in quality that the school provides (Somerset, 2009). This is what Mr Doubt said:

*... it [overall quality] is satisfactory if I may put it that way.*

Similarly, Mestry and Ndhlovu (2014) argue that it becomes ironic that the substantial increase in the funding of quintiles one to three has not been commensurate with the level of quality they offer and the enhancement of the performance of learners. This resonates with the minutes of the SMT meeting of Red Primary School (4 March 2014) which reported that the District Director assigned an official to closely monitor the school due to learners' poor performance in the Annual National Assessments (ANA).

#### **4.3.2.4 Public funding delays**

Both participant principals found it seriously challenging in all spheres of school leadership, management and governance that state funding was not transferred in time for the beginning



of the academic school year. They declared that their funding was paid into their bank accounts towards the end of the second term with Mr Doubt revealing that in some instances it was paid during the second month of the third term. On the one hand, Mr Doubt reported that this challenge was compounded when the school had overspent the previous year resulting in the school commencing with a nil balance. On the other hand, Ms Reluctant revealed that further exacerbating the delays was that the Department of Education deducted more than one hundred thousand rand from their school allocation for the outstanding school water account without being informed in advance. This is confirmed by the report that funding transfer delays could take the whole term and the school allocations fluctuated (Nishimura et al., 2009). Mr Doubt had this to say:

*... the allocation would come as late as June. ... at times it would be as late as early August ...*

Featuring glaringly in the views of Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant was the reality that state funding was insufficient given various critical day to day operational imperatives of their schools. Such a scenario was perceived to restrain the resourcing capacity of the school and the schools' infrastructural capacity due to lack of essential maintenance. Given this context, these schools found it difficult to provide their learners with quality education. They appeared to suggest that the current level of quality they offered was reflective of their adverse resource realities. Further, participants also perceived the inflexibility of their budgets, due to policy guidelines regulating school allocations, and transfer delays to aggravate their plight in no fee paying schools. In line with the CLT framework, the Department of Basic Education (state bureaucracy) formulate policies that regulate the functioning of the public schools (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Such policies may have an impact, positive or negative or both, on how schools are led and managed hence the principals' leadership challenges alluded to above. These challenges may emanate from or be influenced by the departmental bureaucratic protocols which may either facilitate or cooperate with adaptive leadership in schools or inadvertently constrain it through their decisions thereby breeding fertile ground for leadership challenges. Further, CLT views principals' leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools as adaptive challenges which may not be susceptible to bureaucratic formalities however, they demand the schools, particularly the principals and all stakeholders, to explore new avenues and innovative methods of conducting their business in the face of such challenges (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

#### **4.4 Mitigating leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools**

There are two key themes in this section, namely: mitigating principals' leadership challenges in fee paying schools and mitigating principals' leadership challenges in no fee paying schools. CLT views mitigation as adaptive change since it is generated by leadership challenges emanating from current fee paying and no fee paying policies which may not necessarily respond directly to the unique school realities (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Therefore, adaptive change becomes the creative strategies and adaptations towards alleviating these leadership challenges. This constitutes mitigation.

##### **4.4.1 Mitigation of principals' leadership challenges: Fee paying schools**

Sub-themes are used in the presentation of this section. These involve the following: compensation for fee exemptions, school fees and delays in school allocation transfers, provision of quality of education, resources and infrastructural capacity of schools and inadequate fiscal resources.

###### **4.4.1.1 Compensation for fee exemptions**

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence were of the view that there was nothing much they could do to mitigate both the delays in the payment of compensation for fee exemptions granted and being paid less than the actual amount the school claimed since it was the bureaucratic protocol of the Department of Education. However, they would report to their immediate seniors and wait for the bureaucratic protocols to unfold. Mr Confidence and Mr Lingisa had this to say, respectively:

*There is nothing we can do but to keep on writing and writing and writing and writing ... to the circuit manager.*

*... everything that comes from the Department of Education is beyond the control of the school.*

They appeared vulnerable in the face of the long-drawn-out compensation processes and the uncertainties surrounding the final disbursement of such compensation to the schools. This

vulnerability was worsened by the policy based recourse which, construing the participants' responses was perceived to be a futile exercise. Based on their experiences, they seemed to have helplessly accepted and lived with the reality that the departmental protocols could not be accelerated and neither could they be challenged. This appeared to thwart crucial mitigation endeavours which might have potentially decided whether the schools offered mandated quality levels.

#### **4.4.1.2 Provision of quality public education**

On the one hand, Mr Confidence's responses appeared to suggest that he did not have any specific strategy to alleviate the state of quality education the school offered except to point out that he was content with the imminent re-introduction of the General Education and Training (GET) certificate since it would enhance quality. However, he announced that the school had installed a twenty three channel CCTV camera surveillance towards addressing the disciplinary challenges they were faced with. This was done with the understanding that unattended disciplinary issues might ultimately compromise the quality of teaching and learning. It became intriguing to note that earlier on, he admitted that he was not happy with the quality that his school offered. However, at this point he somersaulted to say it was not quality in terms of the school itself, it was the quality reflective of the Department of Education's ever changing policies, including promotion requirements, which sowed confusion amongst the teachers. This seemed to mirror a state of denial and the pointing of fingers which might be detrimental to the quest of the school to alleviate this quality reality. On the other hand, Mr Lingisa pointed out that they had embarked on an operation they called "Operation back to basics". This operation entailed that the teacher should be in class, on time, with a textbook and maximising the minimal resource capacity the school had in order to produce excellent results. He added that amidst budgetary constraints, they also had to improvise in order to turn around the state of their results. Mr Lingisa also reported that they were networking with their well-to-do counterparts which, *inter alia*, also donated books to them. They also appealed to their former learners in the corporate world to give back to their own school and community and from time to time negotiated sponsorship deals with the business sector. Mr Lingisa appeared to understand that as the accounting officer he needed to lead the attempts to mitigate realities which adversely affected their current quality levels. Respectively, Mr Confidence and Mr Lingisa stated:

*The quality is not the quality in terms of the school itself but it is quality because the Department has changed the policies time and again and teachers are confused.*

*We are networking with an affluent school ... we have former students when we need anything we consult them. ... we need to speak to ... sponsors to help us ...*

#### **4.4.1.3 School fees and delays in school allocation transfers**

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence sounded helpless regarding the transfer delays as they perceived this phenomenon to be beyond their jurisdiction. The former added that the same (being helpless) applied to the culture of non-payment of school fees aggravated by the surge in the number of learners who were orphans and therefore, qualified for full exemption. The latter used various strategies to constantly remind parents of their outstanding fees accounts which included, *inter alia*, sending text messages, addressing parents meetings and issuing learners' progress reports to parents only with the intention of engaging them one on one. In addition, Fincom minutes of White Secondary School (21 December 2013) reported that the SGB resolved that all parents should complete a debit order form to compel them to pay outstanding fees. Further, alleviating the funding delays and non-payment of fees, both participants revealed that new learners had to pay a deposit as a prerequisite for registration. Mr Lingisa added that they also negotiated with their service providers to defer payments until funding was received. Mr Lingisa had this to say:

*It's both [fund transfers and non-payment of school fees] beyond our control. ... we don't ... enrol without a deposit, more than 50% deposit ...*

The demand for a registration deposit contradicts SASA provision which stipulates that a public school may not levy any registration, administration or other fee, except school fees as defined in the Act (RSA, 1996a, sec. 39). Amongst others, this demand may be tantamount to or perpetuate exclusion in some quarters. However, a Jamaican study found that principals were obliged to be selective in implementing some policies in order to alleviate their day to day leadership realities (Miller, 2015) hence this method of generating more revenue for the school. Given the non-payment of fees and transfer delays without any perceived effective policy recourse appeared to compel the principals to flout the policies in order to sustain teaching and learning processes at their schools. This flouting bluntly contradicts and defeats

the ends of the current funding policy imperatives. However, the principals are perceived to view such infringements as justified in the name of sustaining the fulfilment of their primary mandate, the provision of quality public education.

#### **4.4.1.4 Resources and infrastructural capacity of schools**

Mr Lingisa stated that when they procured LTSM the previous year for the following year, they negotiated prices with their service providers which enabled them to purchase more with the limited budget the school had. Regarding inadequate support staff, Mr Lingisa revealed that he had written a letter to the Department of Education and had since been waiting for the past three years. In addition, he also explained that due to the constrained infrastructural capacity of the school and the lack of financial muscle to build more classrooms, they decided to shrink the school's learner population. Mr Lingisa stated:

*... we negotiate the prices so we can buy more. ... we decided to reduce the enrolment in order to address the challenge of the floor space.*

Furthermore, given the budgetary constraints, Mr Confidence alluded to the reality that since they were unable to purchase everything the school needed during the current year, the balance of the required items was brought forward to the following year/s. The minutes of the SMT meeting of White Secondary School (22 July 2014) confirmed that the procurement of LTSM was on the basis of priority since financial constraints prevented them from buying everything for all grades and learning areas in one year. Minutes of SMT meeting of White Secondary School (22 July 2014) had this to report:

*Textbooks: Bias will be towards grade eight and nine with purchases [of] up to R50 000. Last year [2013] ±R100 000 was spent on English and IsiZulu textbooks.*

With regard to some maintenance of the physical infrastructure, Mr Confidence stated that they sometimes enlisted the services of the Department of Public Works. Mr Confidence further revealed that Wi-Fi was being installed at the school with the intention of expanding internet access for both teachers and learners. Such expansion was meant to mitigate the limited resource capacity of the library and the school at large. He added that they also had software that enabled them to control and monitor both learner and teacher attendance online.

How Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence alleviated their resources and infrastructural capacity realities mirrored their schools' priorities and their starkly unequal financial muscle and infrastructure though they were both fee paying schools. Though these schools were potentially able to raise revenue to mitigate challenges, they still appeared to rely on the services of different state departments for either personnel or upkeep of school infrastructure.

#### **4.4.1.5 Inadequate fiscal resources**

Drawing from the voices of both participants, it became clear that approaching the corporate world for sponsorships was one of the avenues they explored towards mitigating their fiscal constraints. Mr Lingisa seemed to suggest that his school did not experience any dearth of sponsorships. This either distinctly contrasted his earlier sentiments that fundraising generated nominal returns or arguably, the sponsors contributed minimally to the school coffers. However, regarding state funding, Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence remained adamant in that they had no effective policy recourse in the face of perceived inadequacy of the school allocations and protracted bureaucratic processes involved in the transfer of funding and payment of compensation for fee exemptions. The minutes of the Fincom of White Secondary School (16 September 2013) reported that the SGB decided to reduce cleaning staff and teachers in an attempt to alleviate their fiscal constraints. These minutes further revealed that the principal even applied for a change of their schools' quintile ranking from quintile 5 to quintile 3 in order to receive an increased school allocation since the school predominantly served poor communities beyond the bounds of the school's immediate surroundings. Nonetheless, the application was declined. Furthermore, the school hall was being renovated with the intention of hiring it out to generate revenue for the school. Respectively, Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence reported:

*... we write to sponsors. We have many sponsors ... we have MTN, we have Easy pay, we have Gem Schoolwear and so on.*

*You write and you are told that if all schools have not received the allocation you can't also complain ...*

Understanding their role as chief accounting officers at their schools, both participants employed a cocktail of alleviating strategies to ensure that they continued to provide their

core business amidst their challenges. Some strategies did not fall within the ambit of the legislative framework since it constituted exclusion in some quarters, for example, demanding a registration fee from learners. The responses suggested that sometimes they were helpless in the face of bureaucratic protocols though in some cases they attempted to use the established channels of registering their concerns and complaints with the Department of Basic Education. The above discussion confirms the CLT claim that leadership transcends position and authority since it also emerges from the intricate interactions of different stakeholders in the school community when they engage one another with the intention of generating new ways of mitigating their day to day leadership challenges in fee paying or no fee paying schools (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Principals leading the stakeholder collective of their schools which sought to innovate methods of alleviating their leadership challenges is leadership perceived to be an emerging, interactive phenomenon.

#### **4.4.2 Mitigation of principals' leadership challenges: No fee paying schools**

This section presents inadequacy of funding, resources and infrastructure, state of the quality education, public funding delays as sub-themes emerging from the data.

##### **4.4.2.1 Inadequacy of funding**

Alleviating the reality of inadequate funds, Mr Doubt reported that he lodged a protestation with the Department of Education as per the applicable protocols which he emphatically considered to be the only policy recourse in the face of this challenge. Such recourse, though, had not yet produced any positive results. Mr Doubt's report resonated with the SGB minutes reporting that they resolved not to deviate from the budget in an attempt to maximise the minimum they had given their priorities. Ms Reluctant stated that they relied on sponsorships and recycling drives to supplement their limited funding. Regarding the former, she emphasised that they were not always successful therefore, there were no guarantees. Aligned with this response is the finding that some principals devised methods of generating more revenue for their schools (Nyangia & Orodho, 2014). The SGB minutes of Grey Secondary School (9 and 11 June 2014) revealed that the security staff did not and would not receive any salary increment for the past and the next three years respectively, as per their resolution due to inadequacy of funds. It was further revealed that LTSM funds meant for Home Economics (now Consumer Studies) were redirected towards paying security staff salaries

which is in contravention of school allocation policy (Department of Education, 2006). Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant had this to say:

*So you [I] do a protestation every year for the improvement of the allocation. There is no other channel of addressing it other than to do a protestation.*

*So we rely on good Samaritans [sponsors] to come and assist and bridge that gap. ... I encouraged them [learners and teachers] to collect the recyclable goods.*

#### **4.4.2.2 Resources and infrastructure**

With regard to the inadequacy of human resources, both Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant announced that, alleviating their plight, their SGBs employed additional support staff who were paid from the school allocation, with both of them being adamant that there was no other feasible alternative. Mr Doubt added that they also raised funds to pay additional personnel through charging some school fees. The SGB minutes (21 June 2015) of Mr Doubt's school reported that they decided to charge parents thirty rand (R30) fee which was to be utilised to pay the security personnel. This is in sharp contrast to the policy provisions that the school allocation should only be used for recurrent, non-personnel expenditure and that no fee paying schools may not charge mandatory school fees (Department of Education, 2006; Sayed & Motala, 2012). Asking parents in a no fee school to pay some contributions resonates with the finding that even after the advent of fee free education in Madagascar, parents continued to pay some fees which were utilised to remunerate additional teachers (Lesne, 2013). Mr Doubt further revealed that he had made written representations to the Department of Basic Education requesting additional support personnel which had never materialised to date. The minutes of the SGB of Grey Secondary School (12 May 2014) reported that learners were asked to share textbooks due to insufficient quantities and the school was compelled to reduce textbook orders due to unaffordability. Further, Ms Reluctant reported that if school coffers ran dry, they would give them anything solicited from sponsors as tokens of appreciation. She also accentuated that mitigating the inadequacy of resources and overcrowding due to lack of infrastructural capacity was the ultimate responsibility of the Department of Basic Education. In addition, Mr Doubt reported the lack of infrastructure to the Department of Basic Education and had since received one mobile classroom. He added



that they were strict on admissions as they did not exceed 1369 learners though, contrarily, it still resulted to overcrowding. Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant stated, respectively:

*The security guards are SGB appointed. They [the SGB] would always appeal for financial support from the parents and the school used [state funds] to subsidise the parental financial support.*

*If I don't have funds we give them anything. ... but the Department of Education is responsible because on the tenth day we submit statistics. They are aware throughout the year that we are overcrowded.*

#### **4.4.2.3 State of the quality of education**

On the one hand, Ms Reluctant reported that they had launched a quality learning and teaching campaign (QLTC) which essentially sought to mobilise assistance on all fronts. Minutes of SMT and SGB meetings of Red Primary School and Grey Secondary School (4 March 2014 and 28 July 2014) respectively, confirmed that the QLTC was launched at these schools however, the former also reported that the involved structures were perceived to be effective. This encompassed school improvement plans involving empowerment of teachers as lifelong learners, afternoon classes with non-profit organisation paid teachers, constant close monitoring of teaching and learning by heads of department, and maximum utilisation of department-supplied workbooks. On the other hand, Mr Doubt highlighted that they commenced the year by analysing the previous years' results for the whole school and identified their strengths and weaknesses from which the intervention strategy was born. Furthermore, he also conducted one on one interviews with the academic staff, monitored the curriculum and they also networked with their high achieving neighbouring counterparts. This is what Ms Reluctant and Mr Doubt had to say:

*... we launched quality learning and teaching programme where we tried to get everybody that can assist on board; the social workers, the companies that can see our plight, the police ...*

*You have individual dialogues with teachers ... If there is a teacher who is able to attain 100% in the neighbourhood, [we] consult the [that] teacher.*

Evidently common between these two schools was the introduction of the QLTC which sought to rally all stakeholders and social partners towards enhancing the quality of education. Both principals employed a multiplicity of quality targeting mitigation strategies which were perceived to be unique and responsive to their schools' quality realities. However, they appeared unable to declare clearly whether their attempts had yielded any fruits.

#### **4.4.2.4 Public funding delays**

Emphatically echoing each other, Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant announced that the delays were beyond their control since there was nothing they could do to override the bureaucratic protocols of the Department. However, they both reported that they had resolved to embark on cost saving measures to alleviate the impact of the delays; with Mr Doubt also accentuating that he had adopted a very conservative stance regarding the budget especially between the beginning of the year and the time they were in receipt of the allocations. These measures are aligned with the findings of the study conducted in Kenya where principals formulated strategies of minimising expenses (Nyangia & Orodho, 2014). Ms Reluctant added that if their predicament became desperate they sought sponsorship which was invariably not always successful. This is what Mr Doubt said:

*... utilise the funding sparingly. ... stick to the budget.*

It emerged from the data that the participants employed multi-faceted approaches towards mitigating their diverse range of leadership challenges. Starkly highlighted in their responses was their fiscal constraints brought about by the limited state funding while their attempts to supplement school allocations invariably generated minimal returns. This scenario diminished the schools' capacity to secure and maintain adequate resources. Such state of affairs was perceived to handicap the ability of their schools to deliver quality on their core business; teaching and learning. The funding policy provisions were violated since both participants admitted that they utilised the school allocation and school fee revenue to pay SGB employed staff (Department of Education, 2006). Further, participants were adamant that given, *inter alia*, their fiscal realities and the failure of the state to transfer funding timeously, flouting policy guidelines was their only lifeline. CLT is aligned with the above

attempts to mitigate the principals' leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools since it postulates that it takes complexity to defeat complexity (McKelvey & Boisot, 2003). This suggests that for the school to operate effectively, it must possess complexity equivalent to that of its environment in which it operates. Schools need to have the level of competitiveness which responds to the schools' environmental realities. Contending with different challenges involving different stakeholders constitutes complexity for these principals in their realm of educational practice (environment). When the participant principals, together with all stakeholders, devised methods to alleviate such challenges which is also complexity (organisational), they sought to eliminate or minimise (defeat) their complexities (challenges) in order to ensure the survival of their schools. It therefore becomes complexity versus complexity.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings regarding the leadership experiences of principals in the fee paying and no fee paying schools. The generated data were analysed with the intention of responding to the critical questions of the study. This analysis of data was presented according to the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data generated from the participant principals. The key themes discussed in this chapter were positive and negative experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools, leadership challenges encountered by the principals and mitigation of such challenges in these school categorisations. Principals in these schools contended with positive and negative, common and divergent leadership realities and they employed a combination of multiple approaches in the face of these realities to ensure that their schools continued to deliver their core business.

The next chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **A POST-MORTEM OF THIS FLIGHT**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter Four dealt with the presentation and the discussion of the findings. This chapter commences by presenting a summary of the study. In order to do so, I summarise how each chapter unfolded. Thereafter, I draw conclusions around my key research questions. In bringing this chapter to closure, I make recommendations emanating from the study. The conclusions and recommendations are informed by the findings made.

#### **5.2 Summary of the study**

Chapter one presented the background and orientation to the study. Post 1994 South Africa needed a unified schooling system hence the promulgation of SASA (RSA, 1996a). I provided a discussion of legislative and policy framework that have influenced the education system in the RSA, particularly, the policies that have declared some public schools as either fee paying or no fee paying schools. These policies seek to create a redistributive funding model to ensure equity in resource allocations in all schools. Therefore, the enactment of the ANNSSF intends to redress the legacy of inequalities created by apartheid in the South African public schooling system (Department of Education, 2006). I have also provided the rationale for the study with the focus being the experiences of principals in leading the fee paying and the no fee paying schools. The literature I consulted seemed to focus, in the main, on the implementation of fee paying and no fee paying policies. There appeared to be a dearth of scholarly research on the leadership experiences of principals in these school categorisations. These fee paying and no fee paying school categorisations were perceived to influence the principals' experiences of leading such schools. Consequently, these schools experienced different leadership realities which were perceived to impact on teaching and learning. The aim of the study was to examine principals' leadership experiences in both fee paying and no fee paying schools. Further, the three research questions that guided this study were:

- What are the principals' leadership experiences in fee and no fee paying schools?
- What are the leadership challenges (if any) that the principals experience in fee and no fee paying schools?
- How do principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools mitigate the leadership challenges they experience?

Chapter two discussed the theoretical framework and reviewed related literature. The study is underpinned by Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey's (2007) Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) which views leadership as complexity generative. For the reader to deepen understanding of the funding of the South African public schooling system, in the review of related literature I commenced with the discussion of the policy landscape regarding the fee paying and no fee paying schools. The chapter reviewed scholarly literature within and beyond the bounds of South Africa. This literature focused on the leadership realities of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools involving, amongst others, the funding of public schools, school enrolment upsurges and enhancement of accessibility to public education. The key debates that emerged included the reality that public funding of fee paying and no fee schools was not adequate which compelled some of the no fee paying schools to charge school fees in contravention of the policy. PTA levies or school fees charged varied from one region to the next with affluent regions charging higher fees. Further, the increase in school enrolments in no fee paying schools was perceived to lead to the decline in the level of the quality of education the schools offered. The hidden costs of schooling constrained access to schooling however, enhanced access to education did not necessarily translate to equal access to equal quality of education. This chapter has also discussed constraints that the principals deal with in executing their leadership mandates in fee paying and no fee paying schools. The quality of education, re-emergence of school fees, and inadequate resource capacities of schools emerged as some of the constraints that these school categorisations contend with; which may impact on the teaching and learning processes. Given the reality that amidst these constraints, the principals still need to ensure that their schools are able to provide quality teaching and learning, I also explored how principals alleviated their plight.

Chapter three presented the research design and methodology utilised in this study. I adopted a qualitative approach and used a case study research design. The case study was the principals' leadership experiences in fee paying and no fee paying schools. The study was located in the interpretivist paradigm as it was considered justifiable since the study explored the experiences of principals in leading fee paying and no fee paying schools and how these categorisations influenced their experiences. This case study utilised semi-structured interviews and document reviews as methods of generating data. The documents reviewed included minutes of staff and SGB meetings. There were two principals from fee paying schools and two from no fee paying schools. These participants' responses were analysed and themes and subthemes were identified. The issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were addressed. The research protocols were observed which involved securing permission to conduct research from the gatekeepers and securing the consent of the participants. This chapter also outlined the limitations of the study.

Chapter four presented and discussed the findings based on the data generated from the participants and the documents reviewed. The lenses of the theory, which is CLT, were operationalised in the discussion of findings. The discussion of findings also infused the related literature reviewed in chapter two. The findings were presented through themes and subthemes that were generated during the process of analysing data. These key themes involved the following: positive and negative principals' leadership experiences in fee paying schools, positive and negative principals' leadership experiences in no fee paying schools, principals' leadership challenges in fee paying schools and principals' leadership challenges in no fee paying schools, mitigating leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools. It became clear that fluidity regarding how the budget was structured, the culture of non-payment of fees and inadequacy of funds, public or private, and school allocations transfer delay in fee paying schools were some of the key findings regarding positive and negative leadership experiences. These issues were collectively a critical decisive factor in determining whether there was quality delivery in all spheres of school operations. Furthermore, surges in school enrolments, overcrowded classrooms, availability or limited resources and infrastructure and inadequacy of public funding were some of the key findings in no fee paying schools regarding positive and negative leadership experiences. While fee free schools were perceived to enhance accessibility to education, it resulted in overpopulated classes which constrained the resourcing and infrastructural capacity of these schools. Such a scenario was compounded by the insufficient school allocations.

Delays in the payment of compensation for fee exemptions and the transfer of public funding were perceived to compromise the quest of the schools to fulfil their primary mandate of providing quality public education. Therefore, the impact of the inadequate fiscal resources diffused through to different facets of the operationalisation of the school mandates thereby constraining the capacities of these schools. Similarly, in the no fee paying schools, the public funding delays and inadequacy of school allocations appeared to have the adverse impact on the quality of teaching and learning process, provision of different resources and maintenance and development of the schools' infrastructural capacity. Lastly, though the participant principals understood that the terrain of mitigation needed their leadership, they appreciated the reality that some challenges embedded in state bureaucracies are potentially impossible to mitigate. Alleviating their leadership challenges, the principals realise that the unique contextual factors of their schools are of paramount importance in determining the strategies commensurate with their challenges.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

Given the findings of the study, conclusions are drawn in the context of the aim and objectives and the critical questions of this study.

#### **5.3.1 Leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools**

Given the different sources of income in fee paying schools, namely; school fees, public funding and fundraising, school principals need to possess at least the basic financial accounting skills in order to derive maximum benefits from their school budgets. These skills become fundamental in the effective leadership and management of these schools since every facet of school life orbits around funding. Therefore, the principals need to strategically plan and prioritise in the structuring of the budget together with the SGB so that it advances the needs of the schools in the short to medium and long term.

The location of the school, in the township or middle income area, and the school fees charged appeared to determine the fiscal muscle of these schools which in turn decisively determined the availability or unavailability of resources and infrastructure. The fluidity and the capacity of the budget appeared to grant fee paying schools a competitive edge over each other and their no fee paying counterparts. This means that the principals of these schools are

able to address the day to day operational needs of their schools which responds to the rapid changes in the realm of educational practice. Furthermore, commanding high enrolment is seen as a fundraiser, as it may translate to more public funding and school fees, irrespective of the impact of such enrolment on the infrastructural and resource capacity of the schools. Such a view totally disregards the reality that more public funding does not necessarily directly translate to adequate funding for the entire school operations and neither it is guaranteed that all learners shall pay school fees. To this end, on the contrary, instead of generating more revenue for the school, this high enrolment may fail to generate steady revenue thereby exacerbating the financial realities of the school. Principals need to be cautious regarding the presumption, which may be refuted, that high enrolment guarantees more revenue for the schools. They need to ensure that there is a state of equilibrium between their current school enrolments and the capacities of their resources and infrastructure.

The negative experiences in fee paying schools demand that the principals become innovative in their approaches and strategies if they are to sustain the execution of their schools' primary mandate; the provision of quality public education. They need to be prepared to venture into unknown terrains and possibly break new ground in the face of, for example, limited school revenue and other leadership realities. This may assist them to respond to their constantly changing leadership realities in line with the fast-paced changes in the educational arena. However, this needs to take place within the ambit of the applicable legislation and policies. Failure of these principals to be innovative in their financial management approaches and align their innovations with the pace of educational changes may render them and their schools stagnant and ultimately irrelevant to the mandates that they and their schools should fulfil.

Due to the increase in the teachers' workload and curriculum changes to the detriment of school sports development and holistic learner development, the Department of Basic Education or the schools need to contemplate on enlisting the services of dedicated sports personnel. Given this reality, extracurricular programmes may be perceived as an additional burden thereby thwarting the teachers from embracing them as part of learner development particularly if they are scheduled outside normal school hours. To this end, for teachers, this may mean that beyond the prescribed school hours they will have to contend with both extracurricular activities and their normal teaching duties. Ultimately, the principals may be compelled to lead only the academic programmes to the total disregard of sports development



which may deprive learners of sporting experiences. Counteracting this, the principals together with SGBs may, amidst limited funds, have to incentivise teachers to commit themselves to sports or allocate a budget for the hiring of staff in charge of sports.

Further, principals may not be able to rely on legal recourse as a remedy for non-payment of school fees as a result of limited funding, therefore this recourse becomes a white elephant to those schools that cannot afford it. This results in unequal access to this recourse since it benefits the more advantaged schools instead of the opposite; which has dire consequences on the school fees collection rate for the latter. Therefore, principals of less advantaged schools and their SGBs need to explore innovative methods of alleviating the culture of non-payment of school fees other than litigation. They need to ensure that such methods are affordable and potentially, they may not substantially deplete the resources of the schools.

Schools need to move beyond the bounds of the communities where they are located and take their fundraising campaigns to the boardrooms of the corporate world which may be made possible by the principals' networking with this world. School principals need to manage schools like businesses which involves developing their schools into established brands. Such brands may be easily recognisable to the business sector or prospective sponsors thereby potentially increasing the chances of securing more than the minimum from fundraising. Further, the Department of Basic Education contradicts itself and its own policies when some fee paying schools provide learner nutrition while others do not. Such a scenario perpetuates inconsistencies in the implementation of policy and unduly benefits the schools which are otherwise not legitimate beneficiaries. Principals of fee paying schools that are feeding have a responsibility to inform the Department of the exact number of learners who genuinely benefit from the nutrition programme so that the budget is allocated accordingly. By so doing the rest of the learner nutrition funds may be redirected to the schools that need this programme the most.

The prevalent perception, considered to be the positive experience, amongst the principals of no fee paying schools was that managing school finances did not constitute any leadership complexity which suggested that they might not need intensive financial management skills as much as their counterparts do in fee paying schools. At this point, contrarily, the prescriptions regarding the how of the disbursement of school allocation was perceived to be an advantage instead of being viewed as a constraint which handicapped the flexibility scope

of the school allocation. Even though the no fee paying schools may have one main source of income, principals still need to have basic accounting skills since they handle substantial amounts of money from public funding. This is essential in the face of the need to correctly interpret the guidelines that regulate the use of school allocations and to optimise the limited capacity of such funding.

Given the surges in school enrolments, the fee free schools and learner nutrition seemed to enhance access to education for learners who otherwise would not have either gained equal access to or benefitted from the teaching and learning process. Consequently, educational costs and poor socioeconomic background may prevent children from accessing equal educational opportunities. Consequently, it is critical that the principals in the no fee schools understand that if they decide to flout the policies by, for example, charging school fees, they may constrain access to education and exclude some learners. In addition, ensuring that all learners equally benefit from the nutrition programme, principals need to make certain that the programme is well monitored from service provider, kitchen staff to the actual feeding of learners.

Furthermore, potential sponsors seemed to lack understanding regarding how the no fee paying schools are funded and whether they are adequately funded. This scenario diminished the prospects of maximising returns on fundraising drives the schools embarked on. The minimal returns on fundraising appeared to be reflective of the lack of sustainable, aggressive fundraising policies and techniques which in return minimised the capacity of school coffers. To this end, no fee paying schools were only able to provide the bare minimum regarding the provision of LTSM. In leading fundraising, principals and all other stakeholders need to educate the potential sponsors or the business world about the policy provisions governing the funding of no fee schools. This may only be achieved if the stakeholder collective, led by the principals, make fundraising the well-orchestrated, crucial part of school programmes thereby preventing it from becoming an optional extra yielding minimal returns.

The influx of learners to the no fee paying schools triggered or compounded a number of negative leadership experiences. These experiences suggested that the no fee paying schools were not ready to accommodate the sudden increase in their enrolments in terms of their infrastructural and resourcing capacities. It becomes a serious indictment on the office of the principal that the school infrastructure is unable or finds it difficult to accommodate the hike

in the learner population. This increase also suggested that some teachers were overloaded and overworked which raised questions about their effectiveness in the classroom. Contrarily, even if given such reality the principals, as chief accounting officers, still need to ensure that there is effective teaching and learning for all learners.

Though the no fee schools received state funding that was substantially higher than that of their fee paying counterparts and commanded higher enrolments, their financial capacity was generally still inadequate. Consequently, the increased school allocation failed to assist these schools in their quest to enhance their capacities so that they correspond with learner population numbers. Paradoxically, though funding was substantially increased for quintiles 1, 2 and 3, it failed to level the playing field for these schools and their counterparts. Therefore, this increase is not substantial enough to adequately fund the provision of quality public education in these schools. Given this scenario, the principals and the SGBs need to lead the attempts to supplement the resources provided by the state as it is sanctioned by SASA. It becomes clear that the state resources alone may only afford these schools a limited capacity which may ultimately compromise some crucial school operations.

Though the schools were accessible to poor learners however, this accessibility may not have necessarily translated into equal access to teaching and learning if learners had limited access to LTSM or teaching personnel. Such a scenario highlighted and widened the disparities in the public schooling system between the previously advantaged and the disadvantaged and marginalised. Given such negative experiences, principals still need to ensure that their mitigation strategies do not, in some cases, contradictorily aggravate the plight of some learners, for example, when learners share textbooks. This suggests that in these schools, principals need to prioritise the provision of LTSM for all learners.

In addition, the burglaries, at the school, which constantly targeted food for learner nutrition programme appeared to mirror the unemployment and poverty levels in the school surroundings and that the school was not adequately secured. Therefore, prioritising security is inevitable before it further compromises the teaching and learning processes. This emphasises the collective responsibility of the principals and the SGBs to make certain that the security of the school premises is enhanced. Such enhancement may render the schools conducive towards becoming centres of teaching and learning excellence.

### **5.3.2 Principals' leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools**

It becomes ironical that compensation for fee exemptions which was introduced to assist the schools to recoup the money lost through exemptions granted was perceived to be partially responsible for the diminishing financial capacities of schools. This is due to lack of transparency regarding the formula used to calculate compensation payments thereby breeding uncertainties around its implementation and the prolonged delays in the processing of such payments. This leadership challenge impedes the principals from effective strategic planning and ultimately, contradictorily, defeats the ends of the policy imperatives of fee exemptions compensation; which is to cushion the school finances from the impact of lost revenue.

Fee paying schools contended with the reality of inadequacy of funds at varying degrees which appeared to emanate from the unequal amounts charged for school fees at each school and possibly, the area where the school is located as well as returns from fundraising. Such leadership challenge was aggravated by the non-payment of fees and bureaucracy-embedded delays in the payment of school allocation into the schools' accounts. However, other than those parents who are perceived to be able to afford to pay school fees but are not paying, the culture of non-payment of school fees could have reflected the prevalent poverty levels amongst the schools' learner population. Fabricating their socioeconomic status, some parents could have been reluctant to pay school fees as they perceived it to fund the education of those who were unable to pay, thereby qualifying for fee exemptions. Therefore, this suggests that these parents also wanted to benefit, unduly though, from fee exemptions policy.

Further, it also became evident that the fee paying school from the township may not be placed on equal footing or be compatible, though in the same categorisation, with a fee paying school from middle income area in terms of different facets of school operations since, in the main, they served communities and the learner population with divergent socioeconomic backgrounds. It appeared that there was an inextricable link between the current level of the quality of education the schools afforded to its learners and the lack of resources (financial or human) and the failure of the schools to either maintain or develop their infrastructure. This scenario posed a leadership challenge. The principals perceived it to be an impossible dream to turn this reality around given that the missing critical ingredient is

funding. Consequently, the availability of funding becomes a decisive prerequisite for ensuring optimal execution of the schools' mandate to deliver quality education.

Given the financial realities of the no fee paying schools emanating from school allocations not being sufficient compounded by the failure of the Department of Basic Education to transfer those very allocations to schools timeously, the principals need to assume new roles in response to these realities. Principals need to adopt the role of being fundraisers and lead the fundraising campaigns from the front. Fundraising can no longer be left to chance or be an optional episodic phenomenon if it is to become a crucial funding alternative amidst current funding realities of the no fee paying schools. Under such circumstances, if it is episodic, fundraising may fail to generate optimum benefits thereby persuading the stakeholders to hold the perception that its returns are minimal. Consequently, principals need to ensure that their schools create a fundraising model and structure or programme to ensure that fundraising does not become an episode but a sustainable short, medium and long-term phenomenon.

However, principals may not achieve sustainability as "solo performers", they need to involve the entire stakeholder collective so that they are able to draw from other stakeholders and leaders or experts in the terrain of sustainable fundraising. This suggests that it may no longer make leadership and management sense for the school to helplessly wait for the state funding while the quality of teaching and learning is being compromised. This highlights that lack of funds may be mirrored in the inability of the schools to secure adequate resources and infrastructure for all the learners. Such lack of funding further shrinks the already shrunk capacities of these schools given the high enrolments. It becomes clear that the quality and the range of the resources and the school infrastructure are also dependent on the availability of funds; a scenario which ultimately has consequences for the teaching and learning process.

### **5.3.3 Mitigating leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools**

Participants perceive it to be their responsibility to lead mitigation strategies, amidst leadership challenges, in the fee paying schools in order to ensure that the schools' core business, teaching and learning, does not grind to a halt. The varied range of strategies the principals employed appears to be dictated by the contextual realities premised upon their school categorisations. The commitment of these principals to the alleviation of the plight of

their schools becomes evident in their audacity to deliberately and adamantly contravene the policies of the Department of Basic Education with regard to, for example, demanding a school fee deposit from prospective learners, before registration, as a strategy for raising much needed revenue. This constituted a disjuncture between policy and practice. It is intriguing to observe that parents and learners are either not informed about the policy that prohibits the levying of fee deposit or they may intentionally allow this practice to continue unabated, without reporting to the Department, for fear of being denied admission at the school. This reality unfolded in the face of the perceived absence of any feasible alternative, potentially able to yield immediate returns, which was within the ambit of the policy prescripts. Consequently, principals could selectively implement the policies that advance the current agenda of the school or minimise leadership challenges or respond specifically to the needs of the school.

Some of the mitigation strategies demanded that the schools spend, paradoxically, the very same limited funding that they had in order to ensure that the process of teaching and learning was not compromised, for example, the installation of CCTV camera surveillance to minimise disciplinary issues. This accentuates the critical role played by the availability of revenue in advancing the interests of the school. Therefore, striving to provide quality education is noble however, it becomes a far-fetched dream in the face of constant inadequacy of resources and educational facilities due to fiscal constraints. Furthermore, instead of approaching potential sponsors occasionally which is unsustainable, principals need to negotiate with their potential sponsors so that they adopt the schools. Such an approach may bring much needed sustainability to sponsorship which in turn may result in financial stability for the schools.

Like their fee paying counterparts, the principals of no fee paying schools appear to be prepared to put their jobs on the line by deliberately flouting the policy guidelines regarding how the school allocations should be disbursed in order to sustain the teaching and learning processes. For instance, while the policy stipulates that the school allocation should be utilised for recurrent, non-personnel expenditure, these schools paid the additional support staff from the school allocation which was a direct transgression of the policy provisions. However, while this distinctly indicates the dire fiscal constraints that the schools deal with in the course of executing their mandates; the delivery of quality teaching and learning. On the other hand, this flouting of policies raises questions regarding the effectiveness of the policies

and regulations which require the schools to submit audited financial statements annually. This may suggest that such policy is either not effectively implemented or monitored by the Department of Education or schools submit “manufactured” audited financial statements and the Department has not yet detected this practice.

Furthermore, the resolution taken by the SGB, particularly including the parent component, that they charge school fees to raise revenue for security staff salaries though fully understanding that they are a no fee school, also fundamentally accentuates the challenge of inadequacy of funding. This resolution indicates that the SGB is prepared to breach the crucial terms of the funding policy and betray the mandate of their constituency in order to ensure that the school is secured and conducive to effective teaching and learning. By so doing, ironically, the SGB partially ceased to be the mouthpiece of the parent community on profoundly critical financial issues. Furthermore, such resolution may be perceived to constitute exclusion in some quarters in the parent community. It therefore becomes a rebuttable presumption that there is uniform implementation of no fee policies, as implementation may vary from one school to another. Further, the resolution to defer salary increment of the security personnel for three years becomes a serious indictment on the SGB’s governance leadership as it exploited the school employees and constituted unfair labour practices. This constituted a leadership and governance dilemma when the principal and the SGB have to strike the balance between ensuring that the schools continue to deliver their core business and complying with the labour legislation.

In addition, some mitigation strategies may have been perceived to alleviate some leadership challenges though in reality they contradicted the mandate of the school and compromised the quality of teaching and learning, for example, the sharing of textbooks by learners. It is in this vein that it appeared that the level of the quality of education the no fee schools are able to offer may not be compatible to that of their fee paying counterparts. These realities could have been exacerbated by the failure of the Department of Education to respond swiftly to the leadership and management challenges of these schools and employing a one size fits all approach to such challenges.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Following are the recommendations based on the conclusions drawn above.

#### **5.4.1 Recommendation one**

The Department of Education needs to effect a waiver on the prescribed guidelines which regulate how school allocations need to be spent so that there are non-negotiable and negotiable portions of the allocations. For instance, 40% of the total school allocation may be declared the non-negotiable to provide for LTSM and payment of domestic accounts while 60% becomes negotiable. However, schools which may not have domestic accounts (electricity, water, telephone or internet) need to be allowed to redirect that portion to other school priorities. The latter (negotiable portion) will enable the schools to realistically respond directly to their unique day-to-day operational needs rather than being confined to the same prescriptions year-in year-out irrespective of the current plight of their schools.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendation two**

The Department of Education needs to perpetually workshop the principals to equip them with basic entrepreneurship skills and inculcate the entrepreneurial approach to leading school finances. Schools need to be encouraged to have a dedicated school-based structure (think tank) embracing broader school community that is responsible for exploring income generating initiatives, particularly aggressive fundraising approaches. To this end, fundraising skills and techniques need to become an integral component of in-service training. This approach may constantly conscientise the principals about the pivotal role that sustainable fundraising may play towards alleviating the inadequacy of funds in their schools.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendation three**

Compensation for fee exemptions needs to target mainly the less advantaged fee paying schools rather than all schools that fall in this categorisation. Applications for fee exemptions can be processed during the current school year so that compensation is paid during the course of the following school year. The Department needs to be transparent regarding the formula used to determine the final amount of compensation for each school so that the schools know early whether they qualify and how much they will receive. This will assist the schools with strategic planning which is the critical component of leadership and management.



#### **5.4.4 Recommendation four**

Funding allocations per learner need to target the socioeconomic status of individual learners rather than the area within which the school is located to ensure that it benefits the legitimate beneficiaries; the poorest learners. This may release much needed funds into the public schooling system thereby increasing per learner allocations so that they may be commensurate with constantly rising educational costs.

#### **5.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the summary of the study and the conclusions drawn. On the basis of these conclusions, I made recommendations. These recommendations may assist the Department of Education to either formulate or re-formulate policies seeking to alleviate the leadership realities of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools.

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## APPENDIX A

## APPROVAL LETTER FROM KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



education

Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Nomngisi Ngubene

Tel: 033 392 1004

Ref: 2/4/8/343

Mr ZT Ncoekwana  
26 Calendula Crescent  
AVOCA HILLS  
4051

Dear Mr Ncoekwana

## PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "A LEADERSHIP TALE OF TWO SCHOOL WORLDS: EXPERIENCES OF PRINCIPALS IN FEE AND NO FEE PAYING SCHOOLS", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 February 2015 to 28 February 2016.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Umlazi District  
Pinetown District

Nkésinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 03 February 2015

## KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa  
PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel: 033 392 1004  
EMAIL ADDRESS: [kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za) / [Nomngisi.Ngubene@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:Nomngisi.Ngubene@kzndoe.gov.za)  
CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363; Fax: 033 392 1203 WEBSITE: [www.kzndoe.gov.za](http://www.kzndoe.gov.za)

## APPENDIX B

### PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

26 Calendula Crescent  
Avoca Hills  
4051  
2 December 2014

The Principal

.....

Sir

#### **RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL**

My name is Zamokwakhe Thandinkosi Ncokwana (student number: 212558677), a Master of Education candidate at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to conduct research as partial fulfilment of the requirements of this degree. I therefore kindly seek your permission to conduct research in your school. The title of my study is: **A leadership tale of two school worlds: Experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools.**

This study will focus on the leadership experiences of principals in fee and no fee paying schools. It will explore how the aforesaid school categorisation influence school leadership at these schools or how these schools are led. The study will also explore the challenges (if any) that the principals of fee and no fee paying schools contend with and how those challenges are mitigated. It will also be beneficial to your school since it will initiate discourses on the school's unique leadership experiences thereby triggering and entrenching the notion of reflective practice amongst the school community.

The study will use semi structured interview, which entails interviewing the school principal, and document review as data generation methods. This interview will be approximately 45 minutes in duration.

#### **PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING:**

- There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.
- Participants' identities will not be revealed under any circumstances, during and after the reporting process.
- All responses will be treated with strictest confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms (false names) will be used to represent participants' names.
- Participation is voluntary therefore, participants are free to withdraw at any time, should they so wish, without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences on their part.



- The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate reporting.
- Participants will be contacted in advance about the interview date and time.

For further information on this project, please contact my supervisor or the research office whose contact details are provided below. I hope that you will consider my request and grant me written consent to conduct my research at your school.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

.....

**Z.T. Ncokwana**

Email: [zncokwana@gmail.com](mailto:zncokwana@gmail.com)

Cell: 0839903275

**Research office:**

Mr P. Mohun

HSSREC Research office

Email: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Tel: 031-260 4557

**Supervisor:**

Dr Inba Naicker

University of KwaZulu-Natal

(Edgewood Campus)

School of Education

Tel: 031-260 3461

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT LETTER FOR EACH PARTICIPANT

26 Calendula Crescent  
Avoca Hills  
4051  
2 December 2014

Dear Participant

#### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Zamokwakhe Thandinkosi Ncokwana. I am currently registered for the Master of Education (M. Ed) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus. My research project is entitled: **A leadership tale of two school worlds: Experiences of principals in fee and no fee paying schools.** The purpose of this project is to explore the leadership experiences of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools.

You have been purposely selected to participate in this study. You are required to participate in a semi-structured interview. This semi-structured interview will be approximately 45 minutes in duration. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study at any stage and for any reason. Should you decide not to participate, no disadvantages will result thereof.

Please take note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- The semi-structured interview will be audio-recorded.

I can be contacted at:

Email: [zncokwana@gmail.com](mailto:zncokwana@gmail.com)

Cell: 0839903275

My supervisor is: Dr Inba Naicker  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus  
College of Humanities in School of Education  
Email: [Naickeri1@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Naickeri1@ukzn.ac.za)  
Cell: 0823775253 or tel: 031-260 3461

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Mr P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031-260 4557 or email: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your contribution to this research project.

---

Z.T. Ncokwana

**APPENDIX D****DECLARATION BY THE PARTICIPANT****DECLARATION**

I ..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the semi-structured interview. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to audio record the semi-structured interview (**circle which is applicable**).

YES

NO

**Signature of participant**

.....

**Date**

.....

## APPENDIX E

## UKZN ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



05 January 2015

Mr Zampolwiche (Thandinkosi) Ncokewana (212528677)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Ncokewana,

Protocol reference number MSS/0010/015M

Project title: A leadership tale of two school worlds: Experiences of principals in fee and no fee paying schools

**Full Approval – Expedited Approval**

With regards to your application for ethical clearance received on 05 January 2015. The documents submitted have been accepted by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and **FULL APPROVAL** for the protocol has been granted.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 3 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Shikha Singh (Chair)

/no

Cc Supervisor: Dr Inbal Fowler  
Cc Academic Lead: Research Professor P Moseyane  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Bong Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

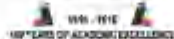
Dr Shikha Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag 254001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3307/3308/3309 Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3308 Email: [ethics@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ethics@ukzn.ac.za) / [ethics@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ethics@ukzn.ac.za) / [ethics@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ethics@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



Producing Divisions: Edgewood Howard College Mkandawile Pietermaritzburg Westville

## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PRINCIPALS

#### 1. Biographical information of participant principals

1.1 Age: -----

1.2 Gender: -----

1.2 Educational qualifications and work experience

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

1.3 School context

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

#### 2. Leadership experiences in fee paying/no fee paying schools.

2.1 What are some of your positive experiences of leading and managing a fee paying/no fee paying school?

2.2 What are some of your negative experiences of leading and managing a fee paying/no fee paying school?

#### 3. Challenges in fee paying/no fee paying schools.

3.1 This school being a no fee paying/fee paying there must be challenges that you, as the principal, are faced with. What are your leadership challenges at this school?

#### 4. Mitigation of challenges

4.1 Amidst all these challenges, I understand that as the principal you still need to ensure that your school delivers quality education. How then do you address these leadership challenges?

4.2 How successful has it been?

**5. What else would you like to tell me about your leadership of fee paying/no fee paying school which you did not mention?**

## APPENDIX G

# TURNITIN REPORT

## Turnitin Originality Report

DISSERTATION DRAFT 2015.doc

by Zamokwakhe Nookwana

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(ELMP))

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## APPENDIX H

### LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

25 Maple Crescent  
Circle Park  
KLOOF  
3610

Phone 031 – 7075912  
0823757722  
Fax 031 - 7110458  
E-mail:  
[saths@wonder400@gmail.com](mailto:saths@wonder400@gmail.com)

**Dr Saths Govender**

26 OCTOBER 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

#### LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

This serves to inform that I have read the final version of the dissertation titled:

**A LEADERSHIP TALE OF TWO SCHOOL WORLDS: EXPERIENCES OF  
PRINCIPALS IN FEE PAYING AND NO FEE PAYING SCHOOLS,** by Z.T.  
Neokwana.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully



**DR S. GOVENDER**  
B. Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), D. Ed.  
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers  
MPA, D Admin